

Haig hails Chinese at AP lunch

A dapperly dressed Alexander Haig, Supreme Commander of NATO, made a major appearance in his still unofficial campaign for the U.S. presidency at a luncheon sponsored by the Associated Press during the Annual American Newspaper Association convention in New York April 23.

ANPA conventions have historically provided an important forum for Anglo-Americans nurturing political ambitions. Haig's appearance, a late addition to the agenda, strongly suggests that the timetable for building the NATO leader's credibility as a presidential candidate may have been stepped up.

According to inside planners of the "Haig option," the gameplan for making the paperclip general President depends on a "series of international and domestic crises which will make the man in the street recognize that Carter is a patsy, and that what's needed to deal with the Russians is 'a man on a white horse.' At that point," Haig intimate Scott Thompson, a professor at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy asserted in a recent interview, "Carter will probably be forced to act like a patriot—like Neville Chamberlain did—and bring Haig into the government to run the show."

Haig's appearance at the AP affair seemed designed to make the scenario described by Thompson a reality. Introduced by AP Chairman Jack Taver as comparable "to Gary Cooper striding toward that trail in 'High Noon,'" Haig proceeded to lambast everyone from the Joint Chiefs and President Carter to the Soviet Union, the Third World and Western Europe. Haig had kind words only for "my old boss, Henry Kissinger," and NATO Secretary General Joseph M.A. Luns, and incredibly, the current ruling regime in China.

Flanked by Katherine Graham, chairman of the *Washington Post* and a New York Council on Foreign Relations member, *New York Times* publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger and other representatives of what Haig, in his opening remarks, referred to as "the most influential group of informers of the public," the NATO Commander-in-Chief painted a gloomy picture of Soviet gains in strength and position against NATO. After listening to the NATO Commander warn of the United States' supposed loss of status, Katherine Graham gushed, "I was so impressed, General, I wanted to commit suicide."

The diminutive general called on America to provide a "new kind of leadership" to challenge Soviet intervention in the Third World. Just what leadership

was unclear, however. Haig made a near devastating slip of the lip in his presentation following a generously supplied morning cocktail hour, during which this reporter personally saw the Supreme Commander weaving through the crowd, highball in hand, reminiscing about his familial ties to Lord Astor's Cliveden set, the fashionable and gay London elite which launched Hitler. "We must have a post-American ... er, post-Vietnam American leadership for the free world," Haig said. He then detailed what this would entail: the U.S., Europe, Japan and the developing sector supervised by NATO and the International Monetary Fund.

Threatens Soviets

Accusing the Soviet Union of engaging in a "relentless" arms buildup and "a blatant and illegal intervention" in Africa and the "arc of crisis," Haig threatened the USSR's leadership with "a wave of nationalism global in scope." This, the general said, would produce "centrifugal tendencies in Eastern Europe, and even in the Soviet Republics themselves."

Praises Chinese

Haig did reserve some of his bitterest jabs for the "free world" itself. Voicing "cautious optimism" about developments within NATO over the past year, Haig insisted that NATO and non-NATO countries must necessarily "pool our still vastly superior collective economic, political and security assets to manage the global Soviet challenge." It would be a terrible disappointment, the General intoned, if NATO members failed to rally to the challenge.

But Haig's sharpest criticism of the West was couched in his startling praise of Peking. "I remember the long talk I had with Zhou Enlai in the Great Hall of the People back in 1971." Zhou made it known that the Chinese leadership wanted the West to win the Vietnamese War, and to not withdraw from Southeast Asia. "When I relayed this message back to Washington, people accused me of having taken leave of my senses, but time has proven me right." Haig warned against "continuing to disappoint Peking." "If I were in Peking or Cambodia, I would question whether the West" is sincerely interested in fighting Moscow, Haig mused, adding that "If the West fails to adopt the Chinese regime's view of the world, they might become frustrated."

—Kathleen Murphy