

## Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

### Mr. Hart goes to Moscow

Is it now considered *de rigeur* in liberal Democratic Party circles that those wishing to become President of the United States must first receive Moscow's blessing? One could easily reach that conclusion, based on Gary Hart's mid-December junket to the Soviet Union.

Hart's trip, at the invitation of the Supreme Soviet, occurred just days after he announced the formation of a presidential campaign exploratory committee. The chairmen include former Democratic National Committee chairman Charles Manatt, whose law firm had extensive business dealings with the Soviet Union; and Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.), chief sponsor of a bill calling for a U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe.

Hart admitted that he had discussed his political aspirations with party chief Mikhail Gorbachov. In response to reporters' questions whether there had been any discussion of his own political future, Hart replied: "Yes and no. Let's say I didn't get any endorsements."

While Hart has not yet received the slobbering adulation the Soviets accorded Walter Mondale during the 1984 presidential race, the Soviets have been making it quite clear that they strongly approve of many of his positions, particularly his opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative and

support for removing U.S. troops from Western Europe.

Over the past two years, the Soviet media have showered Hart with favor, playing him up as a counterpole to the U.S. "hawks" and "militarists" whom they regularly attack—including President Reagan, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche.

### Red carpet treatment

In contrast to his trip to Moscow two years ago, when he spent most of his time with mid-level echelons of the Soviet bureaucracy, this time Hart was feted by the leading lights of the bureaucracy, and featured in the media.

On Dec. 15, Hart spend three hours with Gorbachov at the Kremlin—twice as long as originally scheduled—and emerged spouting the Soviet line on two key areas: the Strategic Defense Initiative and the Reykjavik summit. He boasted that he had been received very warmly by the Soviet boss, and that the meeting showed, "There is a basis for continued negotiations" between the superpowers.

Hart added that Gorbachov strongly believes that the principles of his talks with President Reagan at Reykjavik (where Gorbachov demanded that the U.S. abandon the SDI) should form the basis for future negotiations.

On Dec. 16, the day Hart met with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Anatoli Dobrynin, secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, the Soviet propaganda agency Novosti put out an interview with Hart headlined: "Moscow visit helped me to understand Soviet position." It quoted him saying that "serious and immediate reduction of nuclear weapons" is the way to improve

superpower relations.

That night, Hart went on Soviet television to campaign against the SDI, insisting that Americans were concerned about space weapons research and that "both sides should approach space weapons research very carefully." "I think SDI should not be considered only from one point of view," was the Russian translation of his comment.

Hart told the CBS Morning News the next day that he detected flexibility on the part of the Soviets on the matter of testing SDI outside the laboratory, and said he saw the possibility of a breakthrough on arms control. "If there is agreement on the limits of tests on space weapons then I think the possibility exists of a major breakthrough in arms control. . . . I think the Soviet Union is committed to arms control as quickly as possible."

State Department spokesman Charles Redman flatly contradicted Hart's contention. While there had been a number of statements by Soviet officials, including Gorbachov, designed to show flexibility in Soviet arms negotiating positions, said Redman, "no such flexibility has been reflected at the negotiating table at Geneva."

But to Hart, functioning as a Soviet propaganda vehicle is apparently just part of running for the presidency. Appearing on ABC-TV's "This Week with David Brinkley" Dec. 28, Hart praised Gorbachov to the skies. The Soviet leader is a "modern man" who is "trying hard" to reform the Soviet system, and wants to redeploy his country's resources out of military spending. The United States should "applaud and reward" Gorbachov's efforts, especially his release of Andrei Sakharov, and should "push hard" to achieve an arms-control accord based on the Reykjavik discussions.