

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Left and right embrace

A conference of the libertarian Cato Institute unites neo-isolationists from across the political spectrum.

A harbinger of the emergence in the United States of the same kind of extreme left-right coalitions that are now destabilizing governments in Europe and threatening the future of NATO appeared here April 3-4, at a conference sponsored by the Cato Institute, on the subject of pulling U.S. military forces out of Europe.

While the Cato Institute is often identified as "right-wing" because of its radical economic deregulation policies, it chose ultra-leftist Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) as its keynote speaker at the conference, entitled, "NATO at 40: Confronting a Changing World."

Joining Schroeder on the program was a crazy quilt of academics, journalists, and public officials, ranging from Karsten Voigt, the Social Democratic ranking minority member of the West German Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, to Irving Kristol of the American Enterprise Institute and William Lind of the Free Congress Foundation.

Their consensus formed around the proposition to disengage the United States from Europe.

Many analysts here dismissed the conference, because of the low credibility rating of the Cato Institute as a radical libertarian outfit. However, they would be wise to pay close attention to the particular political mix and subject matter of this conference.

The Cato Institute was set up in the early 1970s as a sub-set of the Libertarian Party, a synthetic social engineering creation of the architects of the 1960s counterculture, "the Aquarian conspiracy." The party emerged

out of meetings sponsored by William Buckley, to bring together leaders of the New Left and the right-wing Young Americans for Freedom.

Their shared values centered on hedonism, of the variety espoused by British East India Company apologist Jeremy Bentham, whose "philosophical radicalism," based on the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, justified everything from usury to pederasty.

In its early days, the Libertarian Party was composed of pot-headed hippies in some regions (like the San Francisco Bay Area), while in others it looked like a cult of clean-cut Ayn Rand devotees of the radical right.

In the 1970s, it was always easy to embarrass the latter variety of Libertarian by exposing their party's support for legalizing drugs and sexual perversion, which was the group's main attraction to its left-counterculture wing.

But, since one of the initial deployments of the operation was to snatch disgruntled Republicans off the right fringes of that party in conservative hotbeds like southern California, the pro-drug, pro-sexual freedom side of the movement was put under wraps, where it has continued to live, in a low-key manner.

While most of the attention paid today to the fruits of the "Aquarian conspiracy" launched in the 1960s is focused on Satanic cults and drugs, it should not be overlooked that such fruits also include the disintegration of NATO, advanced through just the kind of ostensibly credible conference that the Cato Institute conducted.

Representative Schroeder, who introduced legislation in the past to pull U.S. troops out of Europe that was never taken seriously, this year has put in a bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Andy Ireland (R-Fla.), a conservative, which experts feel has a very good chance of passing. It is an amendment to the defense authorization bill calling for the removal of about 25,000 U.S. troops from Europe, on grounds that this is the number that were deployed there to handle the basing of the Pershing II and cruise missiles in the 1980s. Since the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) treaty bans such missiles, those troops can now be called home, she argues.

Because of the fiscal pressures of the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction law, cuts in the defense budget requiring some reduction of U.S. military presence in Europe are seen as inevitable this year, and it is under these circumstances that the Schroeder-Ireland amendment could succeed. If it does, this will be a foot-in-the-door for the new breed of left-right collaboration in a neo-isolationist foreign policy.

In her keynote speech at the Cato meeting, Schroeder said, "Frankly, I see no reason to maintain any U.S. troops in Europe at all." She praised Soviet leader Gorbachov as a "genius" who has taken the lead in "making the world a safer place."

Another conference speaker, the Hudson Institute's Jeffrey Record, confirmed that the Schroeder-Ireland amendment would be a "stalking horse for larger cuts" in U.S. forces. He said the budget deficit, the need for more U.S. military force in other parts of the world, the growing negative perception of Europe by the U.S. public, and congressional sentiment reflecting this public perception, will add to the pressures to pull out of Europe.