

## Fiascos set administration into full factional war

by Webster Tarpley

At the Reykjavik summit in early October, the world peered over President Reagan's shoulder into the abyss of Soviet world domination—until the President's commitment to the Strategic Defense Initiative pulled the planet back from the precipice. Then came the Republican loss of the Senate, followed at once by harbingers of final collapse of the decimated United States economy. Then came the scandal around the arms deliveries to Iran.

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, whatever stability the Reagan administration had managed to conserve has been swept away by some of the most intense factional and intelligence warfare ever seen on the Potomac. At stake is the chance to impart new direction to a government now a derelict, dead in the water—and thereby to ensure the survival of the Western alliance.

Contending for control are, on the one hand, George Shultz and the State Department, Don Regan and his minions in the White House staff, and the National Security Council staff under John Poindexter, joined by such figures as Charles Wick and his silent partner, Armand Hammer. Such persons are the public front-men for the Eastern Liberal Establishment, which otherwise acts through such permanent fixtures as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. These circles have held the upper hand over the recent past, but that fact is itself their greatest vulnerability, since they are responsible for the recent series of administration fiascos, from Danilof to Reykjavik to the Senate and Iran.

George Shultz surpasses even the late John Foster Dulles in sanctimonious hypocrisy. The State Department has been speeding arms shipments to Iran since back in the Carter era. Now the Secretary intones that he was not consulted, and resorts to his favorite trick of threatening to resign. Don Regan cuts the figure of the harebrained schemer, the bumbler, the flake. Institutions seeking to survive often seek to do so by sacrificing scapegoats, and seldom were there more deserving candidates for such sacrifice than Shultz, Regan, and Poindexter.

The Dostoevskian scholar Rep. Jim Wright (D-Tex.), soon to become Speaker of the House, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), and most of the Washington press corps may delude themselves that a new presidential Watergate is in the offing, and it is expected that CIA Director William Casey, deeply immersed in the Iran quagmire, will be mauled behind closed doors by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, which will be interrogating Poindexter at the White House, also on the Iranian mess. But every Washington faction has been up to its neck for years in arms shipments to Iran and indecent flirtations with ostensibly moderate mullahs. It will therefore prove difficult for the aspiring Watergaters to saddle the President with the sole guilt.

A patriotic faction now seeking to wrest the levers of the policy machinery from this marplot trio of Shultz-Regan-Poindexter has as its central figure Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger—the man who, according to the *Washington Post*, inscribed a July 1985 CIA memorandum recommending arms sales to Teheran for a rapprochement with moderate mullahs with the prophetic words, "This is absurd."

The two cardinal points of Weinberger's position are a determination to save the Strategic Defense Initiative from Sam Nunn's congressional budget-cutters, plus a resolve to maintain the unity of the two pillars of the Western alliance, the United States and the allies in Western Europe. To prevail, Weinberger needs to add a third point—a strategy of economic mobilization for peace through strength.

Weinberger does not have the loyalty of the Pentagon as a whole, but he is supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff under their chairman, Adm. William Crowe. Crowe will testify before the House Armed Services Committee, where he is expected to argue that the formula broached by the U.S. side at Reykjavik—a 100% cut in ICBMs over 10 years—is too rapid and too extreme. Crowe will argue that the President was wretchedly advised by Shultz and Don Regan, and especially by Poindexter, at a summit to which Weinberger and Crowe himself had not been invited. Crowe is reported to

have been so shocked at the news of U.S. arms deliveries to Iran, that he cross-examined officers on his own staff to determine if they had withheld knowledge of the shipments from him.

Weinberger shares the views that have been put forward since Reykjavik by the SACEUR, NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Bernard Rogers, as well as by Rogers's deputy, West German Gen. Hans-Joachim Mack (see article, pp. 42-43). Rogers and Mack have engaged in a courageous and hard-hitting campaign to discredit the "zero option" for intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe, pointing to the overwhelming Soviet conventional superiority as well as to the Soviet deployment of hundreds of shorter range ballistic missiles (of the classes SS-22, SS-23, and SS-21) in advanced positions in their Eastern European satellites.

Rogers and Mack have also been portraying the suicidal consequences of any reduction of U.S. troop strength in central Europe. Weinberger's position has also been buttressed by the visits to Washington of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and German Defense Minister Manfred Wörner, both of whom came to persuade President Reagan to revoke the arms control proposals he had entertained at Reykjavik.

### Europeans voice their concern

Urgent European concern was expressed with public discretion, and carefully avoided any open criticism of the President, but it was evident enough to those reading between the lines. Mrs. Thatcher used the occasion of the annual dinner held by the Lord Mayor of London to send a discreet signal that she was less than enthralled by the zero option, and that what is needed is nuclear deterrence in Europe. After a Saturday meeting with the President at Camp David, Thatcher presented a press conference at the British Embassy in Washington with an "agreed text" detailing her discussions with Reagan. That statement gave priority to:

- an INF agreement, with restraints on shorter range systems;
- a 50% cut over five years in U.S. and Soviet strategic offensive weapons; and
- a ban on chemical weapons.

Thatcher added that "effective verification would be an essential element." She also stressed agreement "to press ahead with the SDI research program which is permitted by the ABM treaty," up to the point of feasibility, as she added. The agreed statement also announced linkage of nuclear weapon cuts to "conventional disparities." With that communiqué, a number of tentative steps had been taken back from the Reykjavik precipice: The zero option for Europe had disappeared, yielding place to a concern with shorter-range nuclear ballistic systems. The total elimination of ICBMs over 10 years had been whittled down to 50% over 5 years. Chemical weapons, an area of devastating Soviet

capabilities that had not even been brought up at Reykjavik, were now firmly on the agenda. Verification, a constant theme of Weinberger's pre-summit speeches, was once again prominent. The vital question of Soviet conventional preponderance, obscured at Reykjavik, received the due attention. The President was backing away from the precipice to which his other faction of advisers had led him.

President Reagan spoke to a Washington audience on Nov. 18, and summed up these adjusted priorities as follows: "fifty percent reductions in strategic offensive weapons, sweeping reductions in intermediate-range missiles, a ban on chemical weapons, addressing conventional force imbalances." Public remarks by Wörner tended in the same direction, and he commented that his brief meeting with the President and longer sessions with Weinberger had allayed some of his concerns. Wörner said that "Cap has given me his word" on the need to include Soviet short range missiles in all negotiations. Wörner was also adamant that Europe cannot get along without the full present complement of U.S. ground troops.

A related focus of factional conflict is the insistence of Shultz and the State Department on continued observance of the weapons limits stipulated in the unratified, expired, and violated SALT II accord, which the President solemnly repudiated back in May. According to Evans and Novak, Shultz teamed with Poindexter and the latter's NSC deputy Alton Keel to prevent the arming of the 131st B-52 bomber with cruise missiles under the absurd pretext that exceeding the SALT limit would be an insult to Thatcher. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), the incoming chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has proposed that the administration be placed in a kind of receivership, subject to the dictates of a kind of committee of public safety he calls the "wise men." These would oversee the substance of foreign policy decisions as well as the way those decisions are made. This idea is not original with Nunn, but Nunn is the most explicit as to just who these wise men might be: James Rodney Schlesinger, Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, Richard Allen, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Zbigniew Brzezinski are all on his list.

Nunn, the arch-decoupler, is also most explicit on the connection between budget austerity and the slide towards decoupling: "The Senate will not dictate the budget, the budget will dictate to the Senate . . . the budget will control the Senate more than any other single factor." More traditional Southern Democrats who are slated to take over committee chairmanships in the 100th Congress—like John Stennis (Miss.) at Appropriations, Ernest Hollings (S.C.) at Commerce, and Lloyd Bentsen (Tex.) at Finance—may be less willing than Nunn to follow that logic to its extreme conclusions. But the President and Weinberger cannot lead the country and the alliance out of the crisis without an effective economic program, and Lyndon LaRouche is the only one who has one.