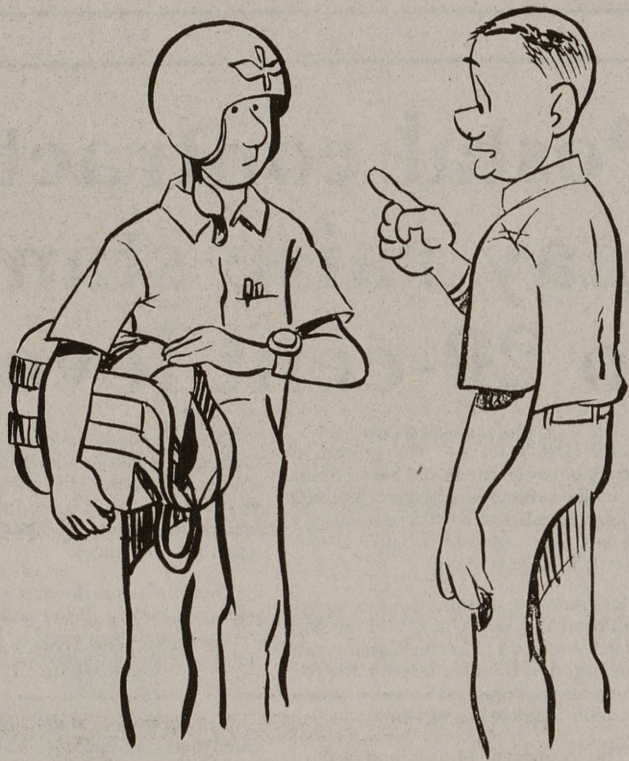


Slouch By Jim Earle



"Could you explain one more time how that helmet protects a skydiver if something goes wrong?"

Journalists watch out: diplomats have big ears

By JIM ANDERSON
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Every so often, the State Department releases a bricksized volume in its series "Foreign Relations of the United States."

The heavy tomes, made up of some 1,600 pages of secret cables, memos and notes that are all more than 25 years old, make great door-stops. For the history buff with stainless steel eyeballs, the collections of declassified documents can also give an insight into how foreign policy was made and how dull all those closed-door diplomatic conferences really are.

The latest volume, from the Geneva conferences of 1952 and 1954 dealing with Indochina and Korea, is a grinding exercise in futility. But, almost accidentally, the collection of documents has a lesson in it for journalists.

Diplomatic correspondents tend to think of themselves as collectors of information, gleaners who can put hints and opaque statements together to make a meaningful view of foreign policy in action.

Several of the documents just declassified show that the reporters, to a degree they will find surprising, are themselves the source and channel of information that is collected and used by the diplomats.

For example, one "confidential" cable to the State department from U.S. diplomat U. Alexis Johnson reported in 1954 that "several knowledgeable American correspondents" had talked with an American press officer about their belief that the Chinese communist leadership was taking a role increasingly independent from that of the Soviets.

The cable quotes "well-versed observers such as Edmund Stevens of the Christian Science Monitor, Ed Korry (then with United Press and later U.S. ambassador to Chile) and Joe Fromm of U.S. News & World Report."

The Johnson cable says it was the consen-

sus of the correspondents, based on the close observation of tiny hints such as the guest lists of diplomatic dinners, that Chou En-lai "has been making obvious efforts to forge (his) own foreign policy in the Far East."

The Johnson cable ends with a diplomatic cop-out: "I do not entirely share these views but pass them on as of possible interest."

Ironically, another 1954 cable, this one from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at Geneva, gives the official U.S. line: "There has been nothing to date indicating any differences of opinion between the Soviet Union and communist China."

Dulles flatly ordered that no official U.S. source should even hint that there were major Sino-Soviet differences. But six years later, when Russian advisers were pulled out of China, the State Department officially recognized what had been apparent to a small group of reporters in Geneva: There were real differences between Moscow and Peking.

Another memo from Johnson recounts in detail a dinner table conversation between J. Kingsbury Smith of International News Service and a man named Zhukov, a Soviet correspondent from Pravda.

Zhukov, who apparently was more than just a Soviet newspaper reporter, laid out for Smith (who then passed it on to Johnson, who was head of the American delegation) much of the communist strategy in the Indochina conference.

Smith, now national editor of Hearst Newspapers, says he had already written for INS what he passed on to the American delegation about the Zhukov conversation, and he had no idea that Johnson was meticulously passing on his dinner table chitchat to the State Department.

The moral seems to be: Diplomats have big ears, and reporters should be careful when talking to them.

Clouds gathering over GOP

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — So many things are going so well for the Republicans these days that it seems almost churlish to suggest that there are a few clouds on the horizon. But there they are — and they may as well be acknowledged.

First, though, the good news for the GOP. Ronald Reagan has reached his six-month anniversary in the presidency in remarkable fine political fettle. That is attributable to two interlocking accomplishments.

He and his senior aides have done an extraordinary job of focusing public and congressional attention on their chosen agenda of budget and tax cuts. They have dominated the debate on those issues. Second, they have benefitted from the remarkable display of cohesiveness and acumen by the congressional Republicans under Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker and House Minority Leader Bob Michel.

The teamwork of the White House and the GOP senators and representatives has been awesome to behold. The public is plainly impressed; each succeeding set of polls measures further progress by the Republican Party toward majority status in the country and a highly competitive position in the 1982 congressional race.

And yet ... and yet. There are at least four reasons to believe that the next few months may see some bumpy passages for the Reagan bandwagon and test the GOP in ways it has not been tested so far.

First, the tightly controlled agenda is about to expand, both domestically and in-

ternationally. The Ottawa economic talks, focusing on the overseas effects of Reagan's unique mixture of high interest rates, budget stringency and tax cuts, is putting on display the tensions within the alliance over his fundamental economic policy.

When the president comes home, he will face a series of decisions on major defense weapons systems and the export of American arms to the Middle East, on all of which his own party in Congress is divided.

Social Security looks like a political tarbaby for Reagan and the Republicans; in all the optimistic polling, the one jarring element is the suspicion by large majorities that those now in power may jeopardize or cut back the most widely supported part of the social safety net. The administration's mishandling of the Social Security issue is worrisome — very worrisome — to Reagan loyalists on Capitol Hill.

Second, there is a growing awareness in Washington that the Reagan White House is thinly staffed and perhaps stretched too far for the demands of the expanding agenda. The triumvirate of Ed Meese, Jime Baker and Mike Deaver gets very high marks, as does budget chief Dave Stockman, congressional liaison Max Friedersdorf, and public relations counselor Dave Gergen.

But there are conspicuous weaknesses in the non-budget domestic issues area and in all of foreign policy — weaknesses that the insiders acknowledge and whose consequences the public will soon enough come to see. The Max Hugel fiasco at the CIA was a warning sign that other national security disasters are waiting to happen. In that area, Reagan is in a race against time to shore up a sagging policymaking structure.

And that raises the third nagging question. Despite the record of achievements in the first six months, there is still skepticism in Washington about how deeply and actively Reagan is engaged in the task of many policy discussions. It was to learn that for five days after the staff had been briefed from the beginning that a major scandal was about to break, a spymaster Hugel.

Soon, the President will depart on vacation, and the questions about the really minding the store are almost to rise in volume.

Finally, for all their publicized successes, the Democrats are showing signs of learning one lesson from their more recent past. They are saying with some authority on both the tax bill and Social Security issues that they are the party of choice for the wage-earners, the widows, the orphans and the Republicans of the affluent.

It is not a subtle or elevating message, but it has worked in the past. The Mississippi special election shows in the full flower of Reagan's popularity offers the potential for unifying a class constituency across racial and ethnic lines, and producing a victory Democrats now and then.

None of this suggests that Reagan's political revolution are about to go off on tracks. My own guess is that the will come through this shakeout in a probably good shape. But I'd be surprised if the cakewalk or the triumphal procession these first six months have



Reagan, summit both under fire

By JIM ANDERSON
United Press International

WASHINGTON — When the members of OPEC, the cartel of oil-exporting states, jacked up their prices 400 percent in 1974, they started something new in summitry: the annual roving migration of statesmen, economists and journalists known as the Western economic summits.

From a sense of collective alarm, the seven leading Western industrial democracies were invited to meet in France in 1975. It has turned out to be an annual event.

The political leaders of Canada, Britain, Japan, the United States, West Germany, France and Italy have gathered once each summer to plan joint actions for those problems which have a solution and to try to increase their common understanding of the insoluble issues.

Have the summits done any good? The carefully considered answer, supplied by statistics and by statements from participating officials, is, "Yes, a bit."

They cite as examples: — The original idea of reducing dependence on outside oil supplies has succeeded, to some extent. In the last seven years, the use of oil in all the countries dropped about 5 percent. It did not succeed in holding oil prices down and those costs have more than doubled in the last two years.

— The cooperative economic action did not succeed in averting what is now seen to have been a full-scale recession in all the countries in 1980. But it did spread the burden around the industrialized countries.

— The countries agreed to take joint action against international terrorism in 1978. The decision has not by any means eliminated transnational acts of terrorism but it has made them more difficult.

— By coordinating their trade policies with the Soviet Union, the Western countries probably were able to exert more leverage on the Soviets in the wake of Afghanistan. However, the burden of that cooperation fell mainly on the United States, which saw its exports to the Soviet Union slashed 67 percent.

— In last year's summit at Venice, the seven nations agreed inflation was the chief villain in their combined economic crisis. Despite a big jump in oil prices, the countries have held to their word and concentrated on fighting inflation, even though unemployment rates rose in all countries as an indirect result.

One of the inherent problems of the annual gathering of the seven nations is that they are not equals. The United States, with a gross national product of \$2.4 trillion, has an economic weight that is greater than the combined product of Canada, Britain, West Germany, France and Italy.

This year, more than most, there is an underlying current of adversary politics within the group as the Western Europeans, in a series of preliminary meetings, agreed upon action they think the United States should take.

U.S. officials say much of the preliminary maneuvering is meant for domestic political consumption in Europe. But,

allowing for that, there appears to be genuine grievances against the administration on three points:

— The Reagan economic recovery program, while laudable for making the dollar strong, is doing so in ways so profound and sometimes harmful to the other countries — by devaluing the French franc and pound to make the dollar healthy.

— The Western Europeans, particularly the West Germans, have close and political links with Eastern Europe. They fear the sometimes strident Soviet rhetoric coming from Washington will create a new Cold War. The European nations, which have gained assurance of economic and political independence from Moscow during the past decade, may once again be locked into a new Iron Curtain if the clock is turned to the Cold War days.

— Some of the Europeans doubt the Reagan administration is sincere in trying to reach an early agreement with the Soviets on arms control. The administration scrapped the painfully negotiated SALT II agreement and has shown a sense of urgency in approaching the Soviet talks to limit long-range nuclear weapons stationed in Europe.

American officials warn that the results are expected from the summit. That is another way of saying they think they can contain the criticisms of other nations and the industrial world. The summit will be pretty much the same as before.

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The Battalion is published Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during Texas A&M's summer semesters. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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