

DEFENSE

MECHANISMS

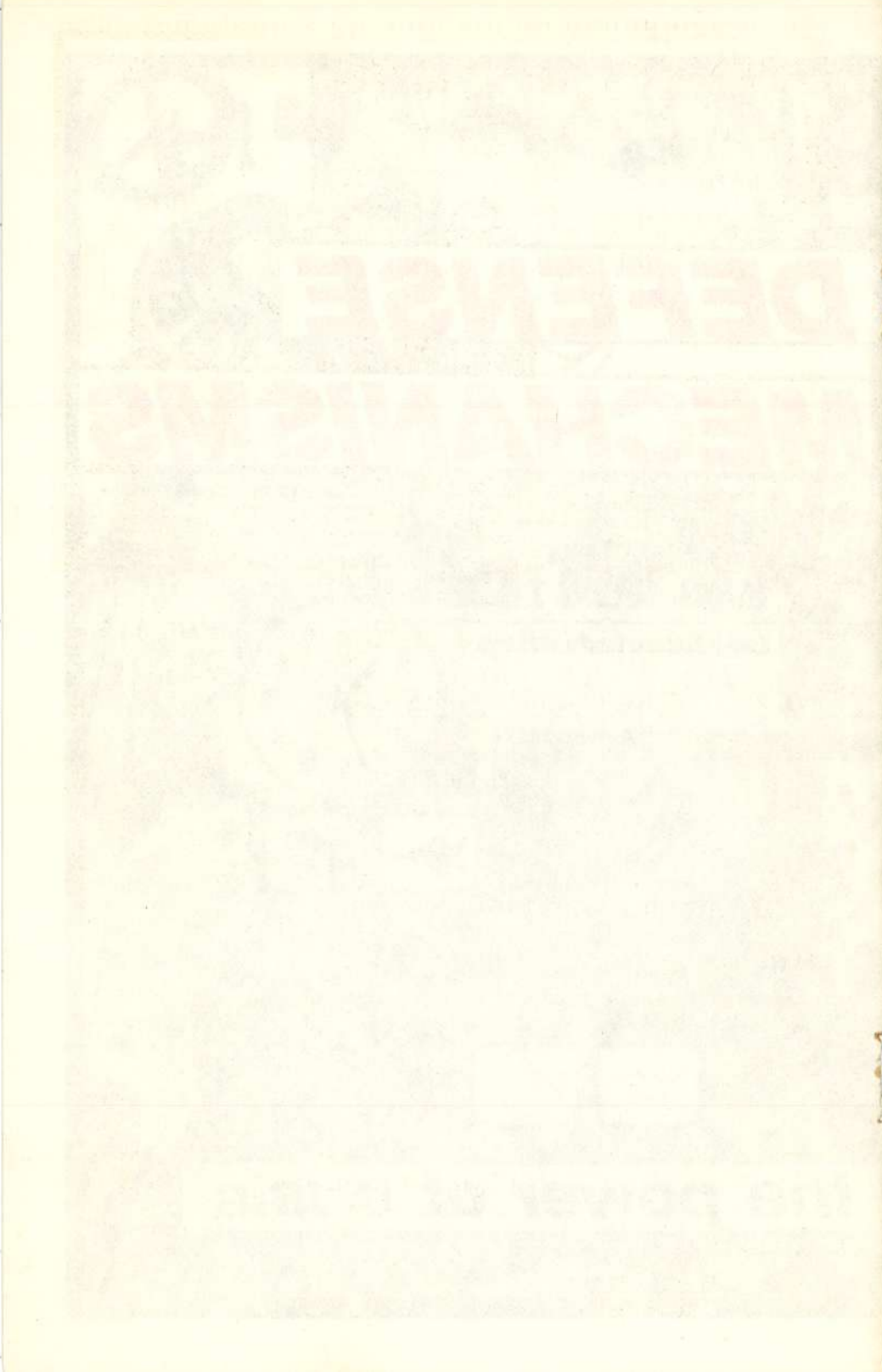
Dow Jones Industrials

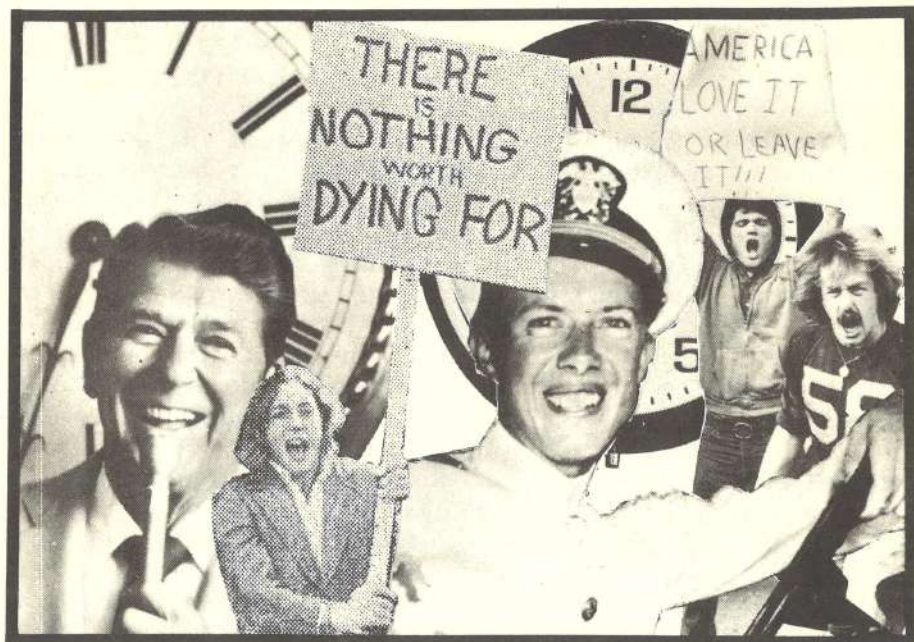
POWER & POLICY

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the power of crisis





While time never really stands still, it can be made to appear stationary or even to run backwards. As though to disprove the confident predictions of those who measure change in terms of decades, the opening of the 1980's has resembled less the beginning of something new than an actual regression, a theatrical revival in which an entire stock scenery has been dusted off and reassembled on stage. Such decrepit characters as war, patriotism, and authority are again receiving applause in the public arena, where they find an opponent in another ghost from the past, the anti-draft movement. This repeat performance from the 50's and 60's has been vivid enough for large numbers of the audience to suspend disbelief and ignore the machinery of illusion at work in front of them.

Despite its apparent success at the box office - from the T.V. ratings game to Carter's standing in the polls - "Cold War II" (with its double feature "America Held Hostage") nonetheless seems unconvincing. At the very least, it cannot be taken at face value, all the more because the reruns are now themselves being reshowed. The real drama is taking place behind the scenes, and here it is not so much a question of theater as of power plays, both international and internal, serving the specific ends of competitors in the U.S., USSR, Iran, and elsewhere. Showmanship has its value in these maneuvers, of course, especially in those acts produced for the domestic market. But the relationship between image and reality needs to be clarified. In the present "atmosphere of crisis," it is necessary to distinguish the various uses to which crisis has been put and to separate charade from substance, war games from war.

The bad screenplay for recent history is no mere invention, of course. It derives its themes from real life. However, those events in Iran and Afghanistan which continue to transfix public attention have already passed into modern mythology, provoking not the Third World War but a war of words in which the emptiness of all official rhetoric is evident. At present, a hot wind blows from all sides: Russian generals fight for a "new model revolution" in occupied Kabul; the U.S. invokes the "free world" while unsuccessfully courting the military dictatorship in Pakistan; priests guarantee the "victory of progressive forces" in Teheran. While there are elements of sheer farce in all of this - as in Amin's "invitation" to the Red Army or Washington's brief interest in Iran as a possible partner - there is also the reality of a world based on competing, and yet complementary, systems of domination. The situation becomes even more tragic when mass support can be enlisted on behalf of one or another ruling order.

A strategy of tension, accompanied by a type of psychological warfare, has been pursued with the aim of securing the home front in the United States. Those who wield power in this country have benefited from the U.S.'s initial ability to portray itself as reacting purely "defensively" to developments in Iran and Afghanistan. Carter and Brzezinski thereby managed to create a certain consensus in support of their foreign policy aims. This much-proclaimed "national unity" has been maintained by carefully-measured dosages of fear which have been periodically injected into the body politic, and it has been only partly eroded by the present debate over registration.

The existence of mass sympathy for official policy cannot simply be imputed to a diabolical plot relating to the requirements of Carter's re-election campaign. The ugly resurgence of patriotic, xenophobic sentiment has been both orchestrated and spontaneous. In its unsolicited forms, it appears ironically as an expression of powerlessness: "Iran" or "Russian aggression" become convenient targets for those seeking to vent their anger at a hostile and apparently uncontrollable world. Those who do have control have known how to exploit this weakness. Everywhere, doctrines of "national security" promote, and are reinforced by, individual and collective insecurities. The purpose of such schemes, though, is more than that of mass intimidation. These defense mechanisms are linked to offensive strategies.

Standard "bourgeois" and "leftist" analyses of the contemporary period converge in their similarly mechanistic interpretations. In the former, the present crisis is attributable to the eternal laws of geopolitical rivalry, while in the latter it appears as the inevitable product of increasing economic competition. The most primitive versions of these arguments simplify reality into a morality play complete with villain, be it "Russian expansionism" or "U.S. imperialism," or both. But if existing international conflict can in no way be seen as arising accidentally, neither can it be reduced to a mere function of various deterministic equations. The expediency inherent in recent events

come through on GE.



One fan said she hadn't seen so many American flags since the 1960s. When we were burning them.



(4) Tonight
(5) Kojak (R)
(7) The Iran Crisis: America Held Hostage: A look at the latest occurrences in Iran
(9) Dave Allen
(11) The Odd Couple

11:45 (7) Barney Miller

11:46 (50) Captioned ABC News

12:00 (9) Movie: "My Favorite Spy" (1951). Bob Hope, Hedy Lamarr, Gale Sondergaard, Francis L. Sullivan. Fast and funny. (2 hrs.)

(11) Three Stooges

12:10 (13) Dick Cavett: Quentin Crisp, guest (Part 1)

12:20 (7) Police Story

12:30 (5) Life and Times of Eddie Roberts

(11) Twilight Zone

12:40 (2) McCloud

(13) Dick Cavett: Quentin Crisp, guest (Part 2)

1:00 (4) Tomorrow

(5) Movie: "Breakthrough" (1950). David Brian, Frank Lovejoy, John Agar. Mainly war cliches, some good acting. (1 hr. 58 mins.)

(11) Twilight Zone

(7) Movie: "The Mountain Road" (1960). James Stewart, Lisa Lu, Henry Morgan. Rather listless World War II drama but fine Stewart. (2 hrs. 5 mins.)

(11) News

(9) Mary Tyler Moore

(9) Joe Franklin

(11) Movie: "Sabre Jet" (1953). Robert Stack, Coleen Gray, Richard Arlen. Blah. (2 hrs.)

(5) Movie: "Homecoming" (1950). Clark Gable, Lana Turner, Anne Baxter, John Ford. Battlefield love and hokey. (2 hrs. 16 mins.)

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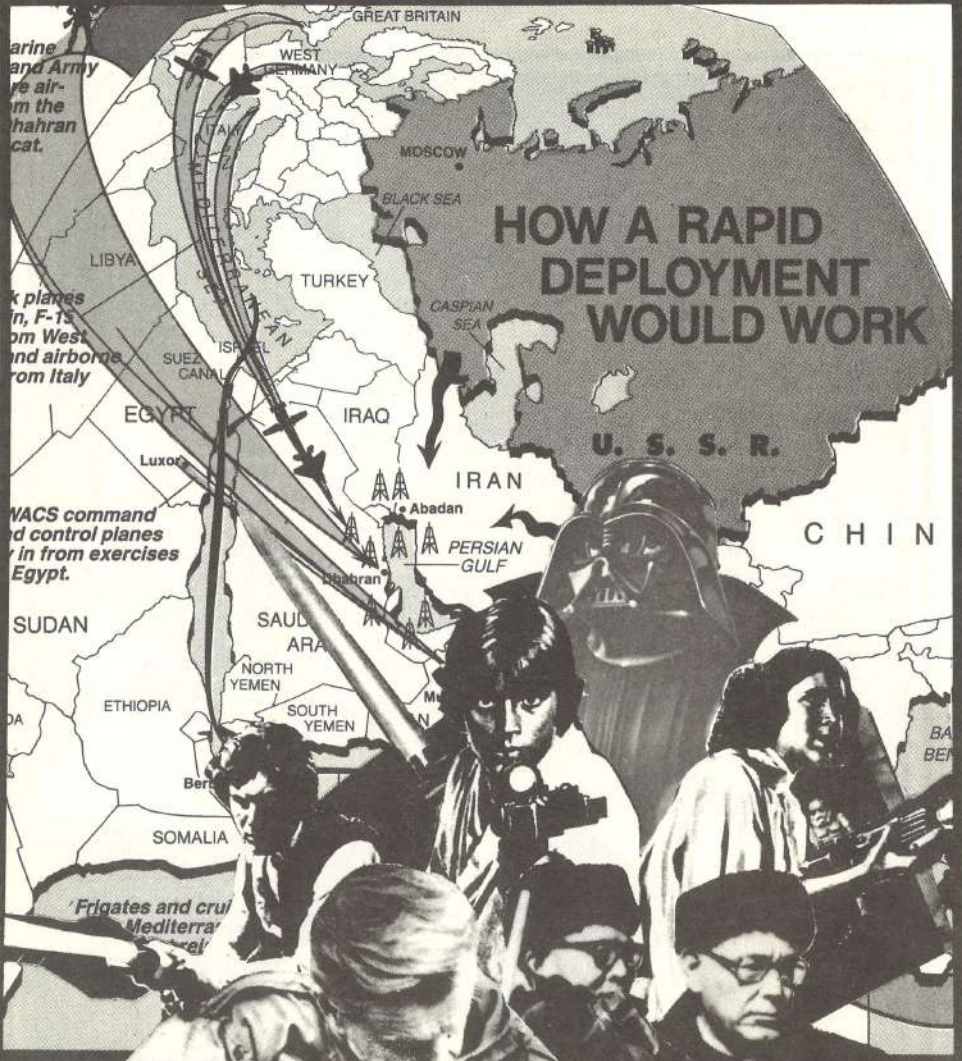
America's true colors

suggests other explanations. And above all, current history is characterized by undisguised opportunism, by a pressing of advantages on all sides. These moves, of course, have been made within a framework in which economic and political forces do operate; it is only that the interplay of these forces is far more complex than conventional wisdom would have it.

Successive "hot points" in Iran and Afghanistan have provided convenient pretexts for the reassertion of American power on a global scale. This revival of an unashamedly activist policy on the part of the U.S. has taken various forms, the most obvious of which have been duly noted by ringside observers. The military aspect of current moves has naturally received the most attention, but amidst all the noisy rattling of sabers, little notice has been given to the diverse targets of such swordplay. The recent doomsday rhetoric and threats of "coercive action" emanating from the warlords of the Pentagon and White House has first of all had its desired effect on a civilian population, that of the United States. As the result of effective shock treatment, sufficient numbers of Americans have been jolted out of a supposed "post-Vietnam trauma" into a real post-Iran daze and are now ready to abandon certain inhibitions about increased military spending.

The rearmament program now in progress is primarily designed to increase conventional military capabilities, thereby allowing the U.S., in the quaint terminology of official policy, to more effectively "project" its power on an international level. As in the case of the celebrated rapid deployment force, however, these actions are, in the interim, largely symbolic. The substance of the "Carter Doctrine," in fact, is less immediately military than political. Behind recent apocalyptic posturings, complete with the menace of a "limited" nuclear response to a hypothetical Russian move into the Mideast, lies a more pragmatic policy of "containment" through the consolidation and expansion of American spheres of influence, especially in the vicinity of the Exxon Gulf. Numerous marriages of convenience have been proposed, and old ties are being tightened. These moves are not aimed only at the USSR.

Aside from allowing the U.S. to recover a small amount of prestige among "non-aligned" countries, the current situation has also presented a unique opportunity for the reaffirmation of American pre-eminence vis-a-vis nominal allies, who in the case of Japan and Germany also represent real economic competitors. Throughout recent weeks, the U.S. has sought to close ranks around itself and to discipline those of its associates who have been less than enthusiastic in their support. This unification policy has had a certain success, but one which is clearly limited. The European powers have shown a distaste for American hyperbole and bluster, and their reluctance is less a matter of form than of the limitations of American hegemony in a period of increasing economic instability. But if Western Europe has shown some independence in foreign affairs, the U.S. has still derived a



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GERMANY

MOSCOW

BLACK SEA

TURKEY

CASPIAN
SEA

LIBYA

SUEZ
CANAL

EGYPT

Luxor

IRAQ

IRAN

Abadan

PERSIAN
GULF

SAUD
ARABIA

NORTH
YEMEN

SOUTH
YEMEN

Ber

CHIN

BA
BE

HOW A RAPID DEPLOYMENT WOULD WORK

U. S. S. R.

STAR THE
EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK
WAR



The spirit of the Czar
lives on.

definite advantage in redefining itself as the paramount source of initiative for advanced capitalism. This is most dramatically shown in the American decision to play, albeit cautiously, the much-vaunted "China card." With the consummation of the Sino-American romance, the "Trilateral" world view has given way to a much broader one. Yet as the field of power widens, the U.S.'s relative position within it is increased.

In the present climate of an open return to Realpolitik in international relations, self-righteousness and self-interest go hand in hand. By claiming a monopoly on the former, the U.S. has been able to conceal the latter. Its own actions appear as disinterested, even as any pretense of an already discredited "human rights" campaign is dropped in favor of the most self-serving policies. The USSR, however, is today in the uncomfortable position of having to engage in a massive police action on behalf of a dependent regime in Afghanistan. Having already been obliged to replace their previous clients with more effective ones, the Russian authorities are now forced to substitute themselves more and more directly for their surrogates.

Within Afghanistan, the already narrow base of the factionalized pro-Soviet government is in a process of open disintegration, a decay which is indicative of the nature of the "April revolution" the USSR first backed and now controls. In a crude parody of what was already primitive, Stalinist "modernization" was introduced to Afghanistan by the clumsy decree of a divided caste of military officers and civil servants. The inept reforms of the Taraki and Amin regimes reinforced tribal and religious authority in the countryside, and Russian intervention has now given these retrograde forces a popular, nationalist following. Those who have taken sides in this conflict have revealed much of themselves: from the erector-set Trotskyists who "hail the Red Army" to the stone age Maoists who support the "progressive" tribesmen, from Brzezinski at the Khyber pass to Brezhnev's apologetics, cynicism reigns triumphant.

Similar distortions and manipulations have taken place with respect to events in Iran. For the U.S. in general, and for Carter in particular, this crisis has been, of course, a most convenient one. In retrospect, it appears as a contrived emergency, one which, if not provoked deliberately, was allowed to occur and then was prolonged. The catalytic role played by Kissinger and Rockefeller's intervention on behalf of the Shah seems almost incidental in this manufacture of an atmosphere of sustained tension. The "Iran crisis" has done more to relegitimize the authority of the American state than any event since World War II.

The force of circumstance has been used to advantage by others as well. Within Iran itself, the hostage situation has proven invaluable as a way of continuing a mass mobilization behind the forces of Khomeini, who faced increased internal opposition last fall as the result of high unemployment and ethnic unrest. In a confused situation with multiple power centers, the embassy

occupiers have now become players in a power struggle among Iranian ruling circles. For the more technocratic Bani-Sadr, who seeks to establish his authority as a nationalist compromise midway between the mullahs and the Mujahedeen, the hostage affair is counterproductive. The Islamic Republican Party and the rest of the right have everything to gain from a prolongation of the crisis: it is a source of leverage and a way of cloaking clerical reaction with a populist appeal. Khomeini's recent blessing gives the right the temporary edge, while the long-term demands of the state capitalism now being consolidated in Iran favor Bani-Sadr's group. For the moment, the conflict with Iraq and the threat of American military intervention only serve to paper over the divisions in Iran.

Whatever turns the "path of the Imam" may eventually take, its reactionary character has only been in doubt for those whose "anti-imperialism" can cover anything, even theocracy. Throughout recent developments, in fact, the pretended Iranian left has only discredited itself: witness the Fedayeen who, having been physically attacked by Khomeini's partisans, resurfaced at a support march at the U.S. embassy. The only hope for a genuine radical solution in Iran lies in the remnants of the factory councils and housing occupations, forces which until now have been unable to free themselves from the tutelage of Islamic populism and the various parties. As of now, the Iranian "revolution" appears as one which never was - that is, never was a social revolution.

The eventual return of American personnel from Iran will undoubtedly generate a new wave of patriotic fervor which will make the recent display of hockey nationalism seem paltry. This will be all the more nauseating as much of it will be spontaneous and unsolicited. For the time being, the facade of public unanimity is proving to be just that, a front, and one which is weakening. Within official circles, Carter has been opposed by the liberal wing of the foreign policy establishment, which recognizes the danger to long-term U.S. commercial and political interests in a complete return to hostilities with the USSR. Given this, coupled with West Germany's refusal to abandon its economic stakes in Eastern Europe, the basic framework of "detente" will remain. As the external debt to Western banks of a country like Poland approaches \$20 billion, certain constraints to American and Russian policies become obvious. While competition, even of a military nature, may be pursued in numerous fields, there remains an underlying commonality of interest between the two power blocs.

In a more immediate way, the present course of events has been disrupted by the nascent anti-registration movement, by those who refuse to supply the human pieces for war maneuvers. Carter's ironic concession to feminism, offering an "equality under arms," has found few takers. Despite promising beginnings, however, the new "stop the draft" movement has revealed its own strategic limitations: not only has it been dominated by past celebrities of reformist control, it has shown itself to be almost

Dealers' Choice



purely defensive in character. Some in the movement are even advancing their own austerity program in calling for gas rationing. Unless the current questioning of government policy deepens beyond a denunciation of involuntary military service and leads instead to a questioning of the entire social machinery which produces both real and psychological warfare, the present anti-war movement will dissipate as the immediate threat of the draft recedes. Meanwhile, this machinery is itself in a state of material disrepair. Though not unrelated to questions of the draft and foreign policy, new issues have emerged which will affect the development of opposition to the existing world system.

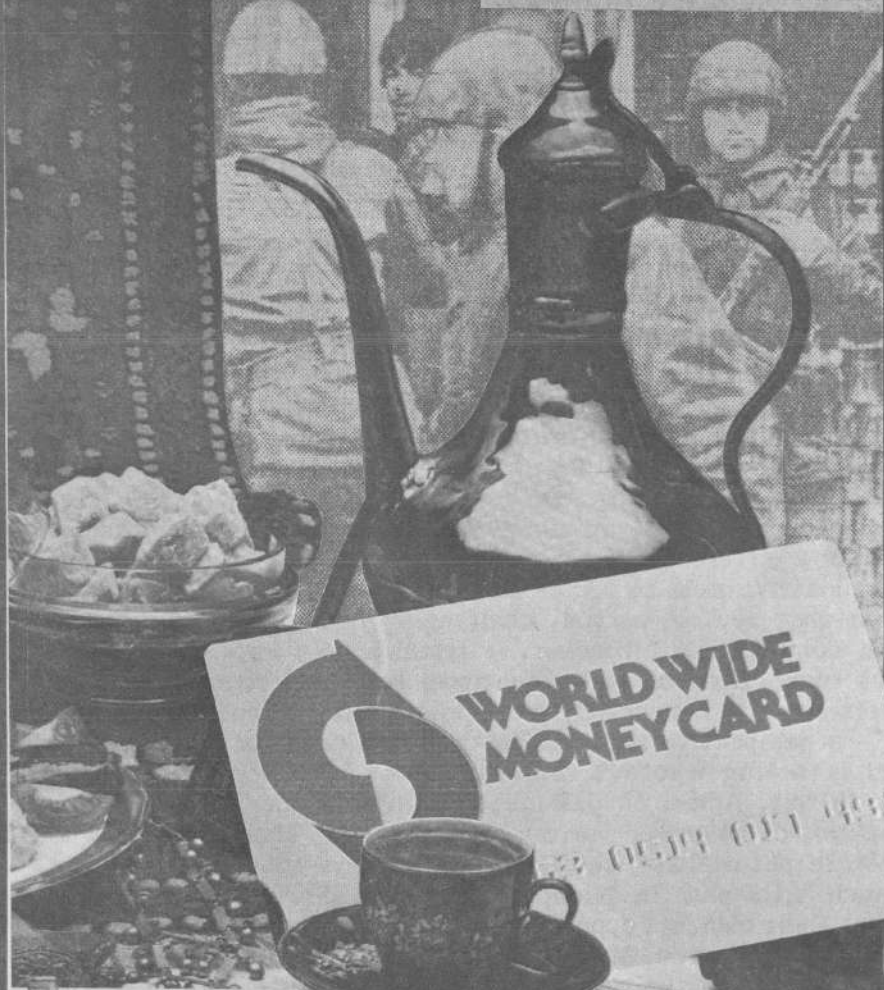
Current diplomatic and political moves are being played out against a background of deepening economic crisis, both within the sphere of advanced capitalism and, to a lesser but real extent, that of its bureaucratic counterpart in the East. This crisis is not the sole determinant of current history, but it does establish a definite context within which official moves are made. Present attempts at "crisis management" in the West therefore can be understood in the fullest sense of the term, i.e., as responses to simultaneous crises of political and economic power.

The "runaway economy," as Business Week terms it, circumscribes Carter's entire foreign policy show. Increases in American defense spending, rather than representing a conscious attempt to forestall recession, pose new problems. These costs will exacerbate an already accelerating rate of inflation whose "explosion" has more than statistical implications. In a crude effort to compensate, massive cuts in social programs are being made in the national budget, and the costs of the crisis are being directly shifted onto its victims through Carter's gasoline tax. For the U.S., more and more weapons, let alone "guns and butter," may no longer even be possible. In the USSR, where economic growth has also slowed and officials talk of the need to tighten "labor discipline," a renewed arms race would also create severe dislocations.

In the West, modern capitalism's structural crisis has again manifested itself on numerous levels. Like the 1974-75 period, it appears internationally in the stagnation of real economic growth and in the rising debt of underdeveloped countries. Within the U.S., it is shown in the built-in permanence of inflation, as corporations raise prices to maintain profit margins and meet financing charges. While capitalism is hardly facing a "final collapse," its room for policy innovation is quite limited in the face of this deteriorating situation. In poorer countries such as Turkey, capitalist stabilization is increasingly pursued through the implementation of shock austerity measures, often accompanied by government terror against workers who resist such IMF "rescue" programs.

In the U.S., the options are much less drastic, but are nonetheless reduced in scope. All the talk today of credit controls versus a wage-price freeze only indicates how little American capitalism has in the way of possible economic strate-

Turkish soldiers search two civilians



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gies. Whatever temporary expedients are used to limit demand, the ongoing inflationary spiral will eventually only be "moderated" by recession. And now that the downturn has finally been forced, it will be more severe than previously expected. In the meantime, as real incomes decline and capital investment stands still, current "growth" is recognized to be artificial. The economy is now clearly deteriorating, and the crisis managers are taking the ideological offensive, indicated by Alfred Kahn's declaration that there is no other choice than to accept a "temporary decline" in living standards. More generally, the "Carter plan" for the economy is a counterpart to the "Carter doctrine": both seek to reinforce social discipline. The unions, which are now obliged to mount some sort of offensive against Carter's wage guidelines, are facing increasingly militant opposition from their members, as in the New York City transit strike.

The real "arc of crisis" in the world thus extends far wider than the Mideast. Nevertheless, the present volatile combination of economic and political crises will only create radical possibilities where an open social crisis emerges and those who derive no benefit from the existing arrangement of power organize freely to replace it. Even that will simply be the beginning in a conscious fight for a different society and a different life. At the moment, unfortunately, most struggles are still conducted on the system's terms: they remain partial, challenging just certain aspects of social domination. Moreover, it remains only capitalism which draws connections on an international level and demonstrates its universality. It is precisely an opposing internationalist perspective - a perspective parodied in the left's calls for "solidarity" - which is lacking in today's conflict.

In this, American patriotism is merely one obstacle. Nationalism, of whatever variety, is a barrier. Those leftists who celebrate nationalist "victories" must always conceal the nature of such triumphs: in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas have moved against their own left opposition by closing down the newspaper El Pueblo; in Zimbabwe, Mugabe calls for "rough measures" against an autonomous strike wave which has escaped the control of the aptly-named Patriotic Front. Today, as the U.S. prepares to intervene militarily in the civil war in El Salvador, new alternatives are required. The choice is not "imperialism or nationalism," or one between liberal and bureaucratic systems, but one between different forms of capitalism on the one side and international, anti-authoritarian revolution on the other. This revolution will not have a better or more "progressive" foreign policy. It will eliminate foreign policy as an affair between states and create a real foreign exchange of experience, material - and freedom.

An authentically anti-militarist position implies insubordination. Such a breach of discipline means more than simply refusing the present call to arms; it requires people to recognize that every command is a slap in the face to freedom. Today, as anti-registration mobilizations revive the simplistic slogans of the 60's

***Five to ten years
of austerity might
accomplish a
gradual taming of
U.S. inflation***

Paul A. Samuelson

ICALLY DISADVANTAGED

26. MONTHS IN
OCCUPATION

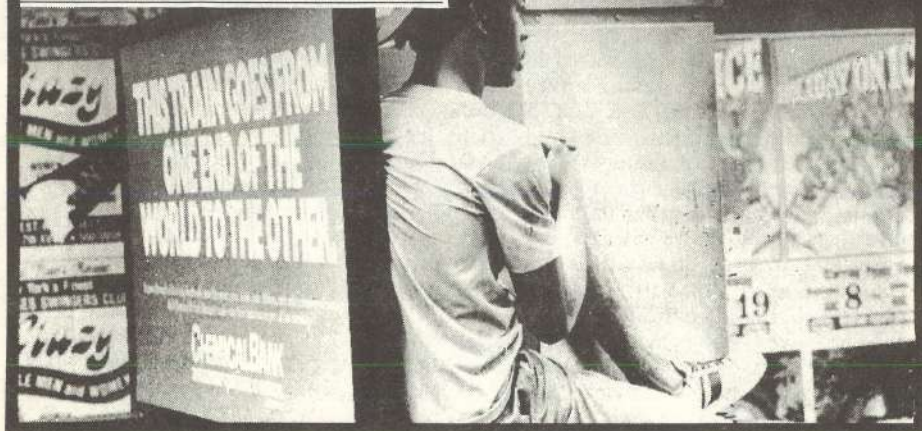
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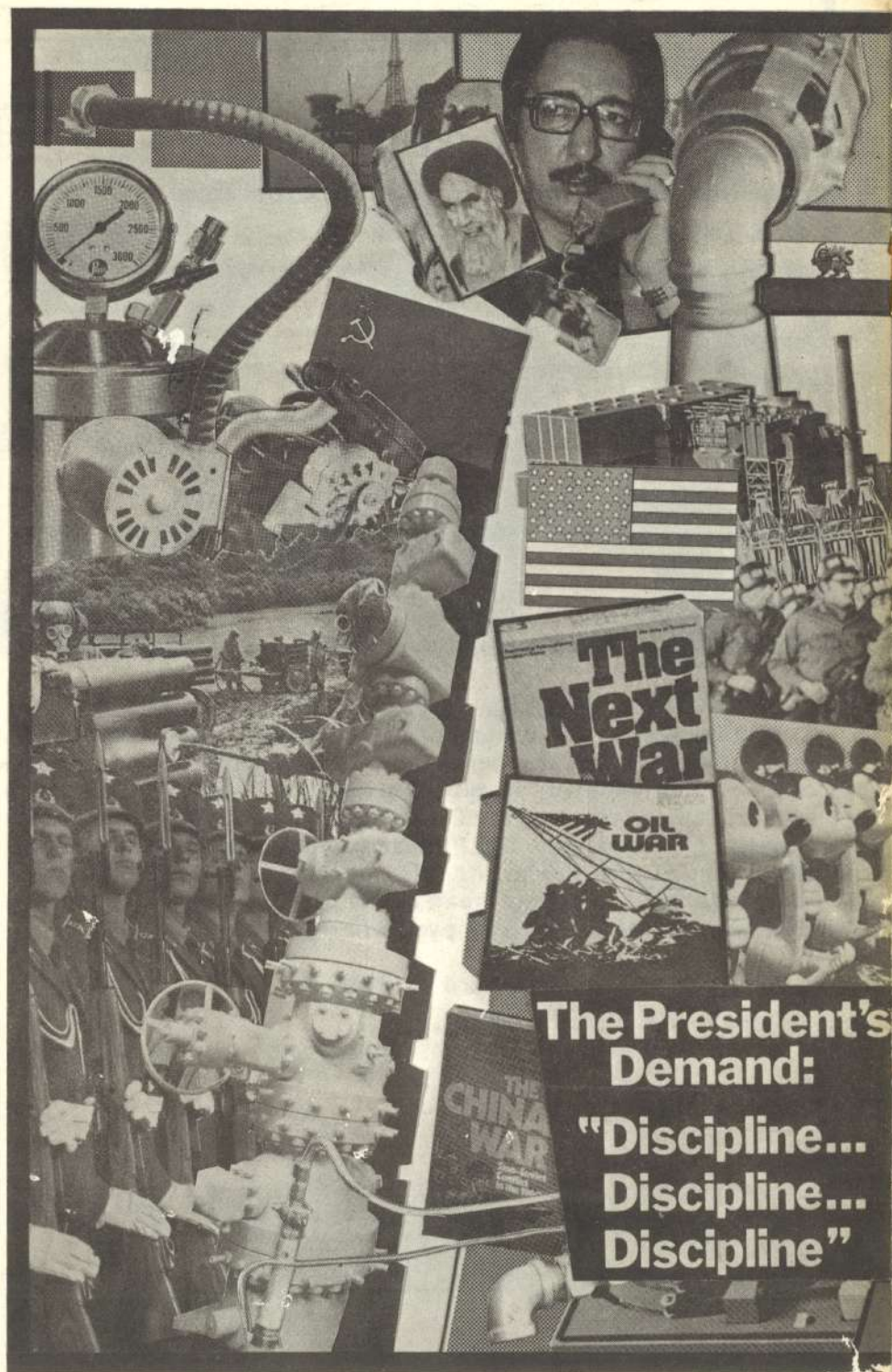
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and renew the manipulative art of coalition building, it is time for a truly contemporary movement of opposition. This movement is not a given, nor will it emerge fully grown either from capitalist crisis or the heads of "revolutionaries." It is partly indicated in such actions as those of the Dutch squatters, the black and white rioters of Bristol, and the French computer workers who sabotaged police data processing. It will finally be created by all those who are willing to break ranks with the present order and turn against the officer class everywhere.

April 15, 1980

COLLECTIVE INVENTIONS
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**The President's
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**"Discipline...
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