

# The Nation.

May 21, 1988 \$1.25; U.K. £1

## EDITORIAL

### A GOOD WORD FOR GORBY

On a recent *Crossfire* program, co-host Patrick Buchanan castigated President Reagan's pre-summit speech about human rights in the Soviet Union as "comsymp" talk. What upset the former White House ghost was the spectacle of a President who once called the Russians the "focus of all evil in the modern world" welcoming Soviet progress on human rights and acknowledging that the United States has its own "agonizing" problems of homelessness, racism and unemployment.

Four days after Reagan made his speech, more than a hundred dissidents and activists from different political factions gathered in Moscow to form the Democratic Union, the first independent political party in recent Soviet history. The new party's platform—political, economic and spiritual pluralism, a multiparty system and a mixed free-market economy—anticipates some of the reforms that are on Mikhail Gorbachev's agenda for the June 29 party conference. The K.G.B.'s crackdown on the dissidents shows that *perestroika* has its limits.

We can only hope that the conciliatory tone of Reagan's speech signals a U.S. decision to intervene on Gorbachev's side in the party struggle under way in Moscow. Perhaps Reagan's advisers, mindful of a political battle in this country, heeded the polls that register a sea change in American public opinion. In a recent survey by the Americans Talk Security Project, 59 percent of the respondents agreed that "economic competitors like Japan pose more of a threat to our national security than our traditional military adversaries like the Soviets."

As Egon Bahr, the German Social Democrat

NUNN ISN'T  
THE ONE  
David Corn  
Jefferson  
Morley

FIRING  
NORIEGA  
Michael  
Massing

THE RIGHTS OF  
HIV CARRIERS  
Mark Gevisser

THE DAYS AND  
NIGHTS OF  
ROY COHN  
Robert Sherrill

FRENCH  
SOCIALISM  
Michael  
Harrington

## GORBACHEV'S OPPOSITION

### THE FOES OF *PERESTROIKA* SOUND OFF

DEV MURARKA

On the eve of next month's nationwide Communist Party conference, the first in the Soviet Union since 1941, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and his reforms face widespread resistance and defiant opposition. In a May 7 speech Gorbachev called for the election of "active supporters of *perestroika*" to the meeting that could decide its fate.

For an understanding of the growing defiance among the bureaucracy and a small section of the intelligentsia toward de-Stalinization and *perestroika*, one must look back to last autumn, when Gorbachev came under visible pressure to modify his radical position on a number of key issues—and did so. To what extent he really changed plans, and for what period of time, remains highly controversial and debatable. But it is beyond debate that these compromises, such as those reflected in his address of November 2 celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, opened up opportunities for the opponents of *perestroika* to push harder for maintaining the status quo—in the name of *perestroika*! The modifications also demoralized Gorbachev's supporters.

This development clearly underlined the fact that a struggle was on, and that its outcome could not be taken as a foregone conclusion. Since neither side is sure of its relative strength in the public arena, both are engaged in probing operations. Popular feeling about the current state of this battle has been best described by





Morris Abram

# A CHALLENGE TO

## “American Jewish Spokesmen”



Thomas Dine

**JEWISH COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST**  
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05/13/88

Mr. Morris B. Abram  
 Chairman, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

Mr. Thomas A. Dine  
 Executive Director, American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

Dear Messrs. Abram and Dine:

Let us together find out what American Jews really think about Israeli policies, negotiations with the PLO, and the need for a Palestinian state as well as security for Israel. For a long time each of you has spoken about these important matters on behalf of American Jews, so you have repeatedly said. However, you have not fairly or accurately reflected the variety of opinions and concerns prevailing today among American Jews.

For instance, in a *Los Angeles Times* poll last month 29% of American Jews favored negotiations with the PLO, 41% "feel there is an element of racism involved in the thinking of Israelis toward Arabs," and 27% of those under age 41 "feel equally sympathetic to both the Palestinians and the Israelis." Moreover, according to this poll, 56% of American Jews did not contribute to Israel in any way last year, and nearly two-thirds do not belong to any of the organizations you represent.

In our own movement, American Jewish professors at 63 universities have joined with hundreds of other American Jewish lawyers, doctors, and business persons calling on our government "to take meaningful steps to disassociate our country from the policies of Israel" and to "stop financing and supporting our country that are contrary to the principles and values we hold precious as Americans and as Jews." And when we testified at a Congressional hearing on 28 April we appealed for a "normalization" of relations not only with Israel, but also with the Palestinian people who beyond all doubt deserve and need a Palestinian state of their own.

If your organizations alone were to arrange for a detailed opinion poll of American Jews, or if we were to do so on our own, the poll's validity would be suspect. But if we join together to commission and oversee such a poll then our joint efforts will have considerable credibility.

Things are changing. Messrs. Abram and Dine. Until we accurately determine just what American Jews are really thinking and feeling, we would all be well-advised to be careful just in whose name we claim to be speaking.

Sincerely,  
 The Executive Committee of JCOMÉ

56% of American Jews did not contribute to Israel last year and nearly two-thirds do not belong to any American Jewish organization other than a synagogue.

L. A. Times  
12 April 1988

**“ Let us together find out what American Jews really think...”**

46% of college-educated Americans favor creation of a Palestinian State, 60% favor negotiations with the PLO, and 41% favor cutting off or reducing aid to Israel.

The Gallup Organization  
11 March 1988

C - SPAN TV



“American Jewish organizations...have made it difficult for the American people and the Congress to hear and understand the depth of anguish felt by many American Jews regarding Israeli behavior.”

JCOMÉ Congressional Testimony  
26 April 1988

JCOMÉ is an independent association of Americans formed earlier this year to give voice to the growing concerns among American Jews about Israeli policies and U.S. support for these policies. Our Statement — “Time To Dissociate From Israeli Policies” — was first published in *The Nation* on 13 February and then in *The Congressional Record* (29 Feb), *The Christian Science Monitor* (4 March) and *The New York Review Of Books* (31 March). The Statement has been endorsed by hundreds of American Jews including Professors at 63 universities throughout the country. Please help with your support and contributions to enable us to continue to stimulate a long-overdue debate about U.S.–Israeli relations and American policies in the Middle East.

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