

Eastern Europe: a new twist to detente

A daring young plan on a flying trapeze

All of Europe is divided into three parts: England, which sits like an elderly Victorian widow on the continent's porch steps; Western Europe, which adheres to an imaginary line running from somewhere east of Oslo to the ruins of Athens and which, in the American mind, is synonymous with NATO and a potpourri of philosophies, economies, literatures, politics and a *weltanschauung* commonly lumped under the general heading of civilization; and the rest of the continent — the East — which, for the sake of convenience and an American tendency for oversimplification, is perceived as somehow spontaneously materializing one good stone's throw from the top of the Berlin Wall and culminating in the dust kicked up by one good-sized parade through Moscow's Red Square.

Thus has played the longest running costume drama — the cold war — on record, replete with subtle moves, mime, dialogue, melodrama, props, conflict, catharsis and all the stuff of theatre that could keep the show in town well-nigh forever.

But nothing is so complex as the simple. The eastern half of the cold war scenario — cavalierly written off by the West for so long as belonging to a monolithic communism — is in reality a large and varied mass of separate cultures having much in common with Western Europe and not nearly so much in common with the Soviet Union as Americans are so quick to think. But the nature of geopolitics is like that. Sometimes you can't see the countries for the maps.

Now there appears to be developing a cautious movement on the part of the Carter administration to divide Eastern Europe into three parts: the Soviet Union, satellite nations who wish to remain just that, and the rest of what was once called the "captive nations" who wish to regain their Western roots. The plan is simple: the further away these latter nations break away from the heavy-handed police-state tactics of the Soviet Union, the more economic advantages they will enjoy with the United States and Western Europe. They have nothing to lose except what they have already lost, and much to gain. In exchange the United States, while at the same time courting the Chinese to an increasingly greater degree, will be able to apply pressure on the Soviet Union from all sides and, so the scenario is written, will cause the Russians to pull back their expanding presence in other areas of the world.

This policy of weaning Eastern Europe away from the Soviet breast is not new. Willy Brandt tried it and termed the effort his *Ostpolitik*. Henry Kissinger also tried it, although cautiously and always with a courtesy call placed through Moscow so as not to invite another Budapest or Prague Spring.

But the Carter administration's own version of *Ostpolitik*, engineered primarily by national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, is being carried out far less hesitantly and is being tied in with the administration's concern for the issue of human rights. To



THE TAR HEEL

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The *Tar Heel* is published every Thursday during summer school. Letters to the editor and columns are welcome. For information call 933-0245, 0246, or 966-5369.

put the policy in simplest form, every step closer the countries of Eastern Europe take toward political liberalization is a step closer to increased American economic aid and political cooperation and a step further away from Soviet domination and economic exploitation.

It is a hopeful movement and one long overdue on our part when one considers the debacles inflicted on Eastern Europe by the West from the Versailles Treaty, through the Munich Pact and the Nazi occupation, and to the uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia that were to be left "slowly, slowly turning in their own wind."

But this new *Ostpolitik* is also a dangerous game that could nurture the seeds for the mortality of all of civilization — for indeed every action has a reaction. In this case, to pull the countries of Eastern Europe too abruptly out of the Soviet orbit is to risk at best an increase in Soviet pressure on the area, and at worst war. To move too slowly, on the other hand, is to convince, perhaps forever, the peoples of Eastern Europe that they are being abandoned on the Soviet doorstep yet another and perhaps final time.

The Carter administration's movement in this new direction, then, must be based on a delicate balancing of countervailing and complex interests: the Soviet Union must not be driven any further into a xenophobic outlook toward the Western world — wholly justifiable by its own tragic experiences with that world in this century — and at the same time must not be made to feel that it is losing its internal security by the loss of a buffer zone it feels it needs for its own protection.

What our goal must be is to first understand the symbiotic relationship that exists between Eastern Europe — tied historically and culturally to the West by every measurement of civilization — and the schizophrenia that is the Soviet Union — half Western and half Oriental and given to a national paranoia that alternates between feelings of gross inferiority and gross superiority — and then steadily to draw Eastern Europe out of the pale of Western civilization while at the same time drawing the Soviet Union into a more conciliatory and cooperative relationship with the rest of Europe, for its own long-term benefit.

To do more too quickly is to turn a cold war hot; to do any less is to continue a war of nerves that is already causing a mental and moral breakdown of all of civilization that has been continuing for too long.

The play has run long enough. The time has come for East and West to meet.

Letters to the editor

State abortion funding praised

To the editor:

The North Carolina legislature should be commended for its decision to provide state funding of abortions for Medicaid recipients. It is only just that all women be able to choose a safe, legal abortion regardless of income.

Last year in Congress the Hyde Amendment effectively cut off Medicaid funds for this type of health care. Funding was limited to cases where the woman's life is in danger, cases where severe and long-lasting physical damage to the woman may occur, and cases resulting from rape and incest. In all other instances, the poor woman's right to choose a safe, legal abortion is restricted

by the cost barrier. It is unreasonable to assume that the poor woman can raise enough money to have a legal abortion in a clinic or a hospital. The alternative for the woman who would want an abortion is the illegal, back-alley abortion with its dangerous consequences.

Right now, there is a new Hyde Amendment in Congress which further restricts Medicaid funding for abortions only to those cases where the woman's life is in danger. It is very important that our senators and representatives know that people are concerned for the rights of the poor. Every effort must be made to stop these restrictions on a woman's right to choose. Letters, postcards, mailgrams,

or even phone calls are effective means for communicating your views.

Glinda Cooper
Lynn Gosnell

Critic on target

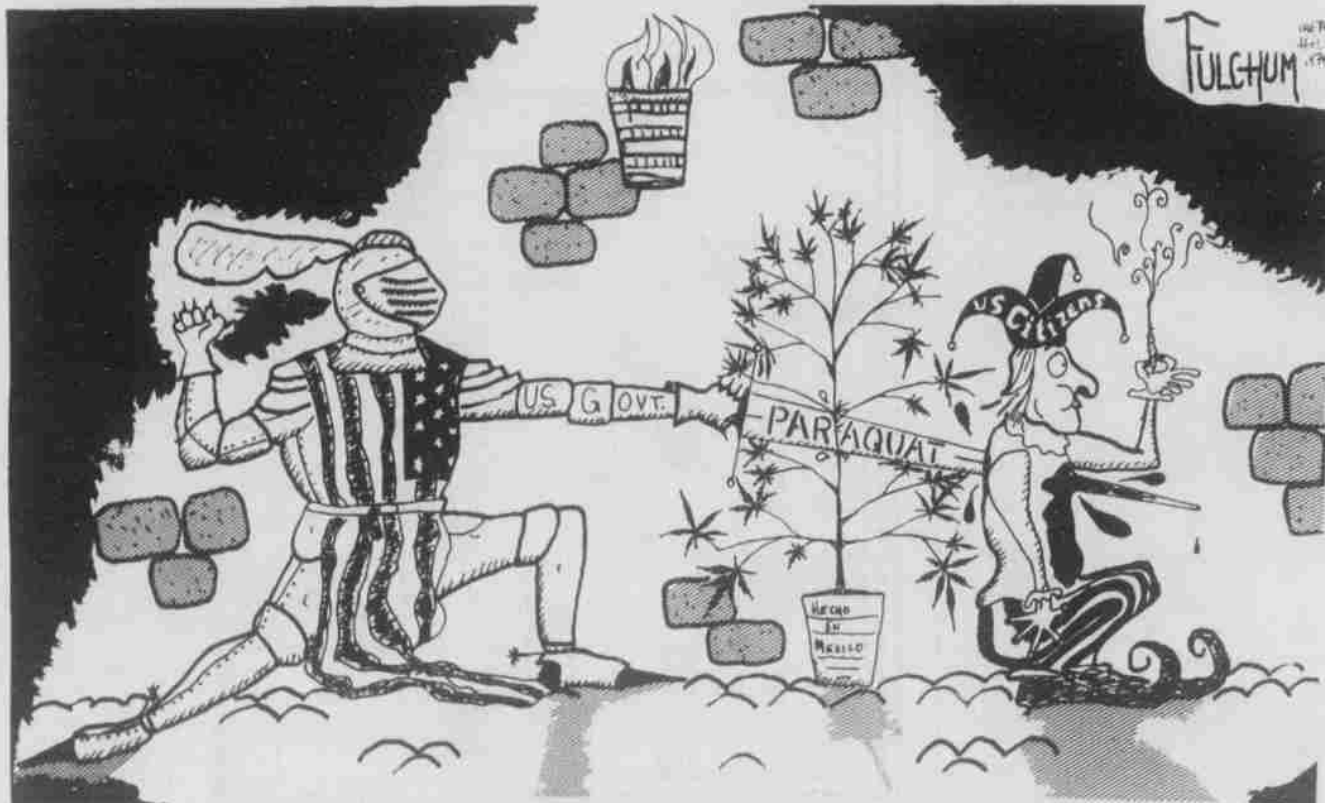
To the editor:

If reviewer Jim East did miss the "whole ironic point" of *An Unmarried Woman*, he's still better off than his overwrought critic, Ms. Carroll, who apparently missed the whole film.

Alice Pettey
UNC Law School

Letters? Columns?

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The Daily *Tar Heel* is published by the Daily *Tar Heel* Board of Directors of the University of North Carolina daily Monday through Friday during the regular academic year except during exam period, vacations and summer sessions. The Summer *Tar Heel* is published weekly on Thursdays during the summer sessions.

Offices are at the Frank Porter Graham Student Union Building, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. Telephone numbers: News, Sports — 933-0245, 933-0246, 933-0252, 933-0372; Business, Circulation, Advertising — 933-1163.

Subscription rates: \$30 per year; \$15.00 per semester.

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