

A Turn to the (New) Left?

"Toward an Appropriate Politics" by Charles Siegel, in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Fall 1995), 10951 W. Pico Blvd., Third Floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064.

An air of exhaustion hangs over the Left these days. Siegel has a tonic he thinks would revive it: a return to certain themes of the New Left, which "wanted people to consume less, do more for themselves, and live as much as possible outside of the economic system."

During the 1980s, in reaction to the Reagan administration's efforts to curb the welfare state, the Left "retreated to older progressive ideas about social issues" and let the Right have the issue of empowerment, says Siegel, transportation chair of the Sierra Club and author of *The Preservationist Manifesto* (forthcoming). "The New Left of the 1960s wanted to break up bureaucracies to give people control over decisions that affect their lives. But now the Left just demands more bureaucratic social services"—and as a consequence, it has become increasingly irrelevant.

Most people, for example, see clearly that—with the landscape littered with broken families and both parents in most intact

families working—there exists a "parenting deficit" in America today. Yet the Left, Siegel says, "ignores this new problem" and pushes early-20th-century progressive measures (e.g., more money for day care and for schooling) in whose efficacy even it no longer really believes. Leftists back these programs to help children and working mothers cope but "have no vision at all of a better future," he asserts.

Conservatives, meanwhile, defend the traditional family but "cannot get at the root of the problem," Siegel argues, because of their belief in economic growth. They "promote the growth of a consumer economy that leaves people with no time for their families and that takes over most responsibilities of individuals."

If it would stop its outmoded demands for more government services and focus "on humanizing our society by limiting both big government and big business," Siegel believes, the Left "could dominate the political debate."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

How to Treat an Awakening Giant

"A New China Strategy" by Kenneth Lieberthal, in *Foreign Affairs* (Nov.-Dec. 1995), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Its economy is surging, its military power is growing, and it is increasingly assertive in international affairs. China is finally claiming the role of a great power. Yet the United States, says Lieberthal, a professor of political science and business administration at the University of Michigan, has no coherent response.

Some American analysts hope that China will experience a Soviet-style meltdown leading to a more cooperative, democratic government. But it is far more likely, Lieberthal says, that a weakened China would cause even bigger problems for the world than a strong one: civil war, famine, migration, and possibly nuclear mischief. Other American analysts favor a policy of containment. But that, writes Lieberthal, would only divide Asia, strengthen China's nationalists and militarists, and reduce the region's prosperity.

The Clinton administration talks of "comprehensive engagement" with China, but that is just an empty phrase, Lieberthal charges. U.S. policy is ad hoc, uncoordinated, and driven by politics and emotion. Washington "thrashes China for human rights violations" with one hand while offering friendship with the other. Last year, the administration privately assured Beijing that it would not issue a visa to Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui, but then, yielding to pressure at home, did so anyway, thus humiliating the Chinese officials who had accepted Washington's assurances.

In Beijing, Lieberthal sees a volatile mixture of cockiness and insecurity. Rapid change has made China more difficult to govern. Deng Xiaoping, who has insisted on a "basically cooperative" relationship with the United States, is in his last days, and a succes-

sion struggle is imminent. The temptation to play the nationalist card will grow. Many in Beijing detect a new reluctance in international councils such as the World Bank to make allowances for what Beijing calls "Chinese characteristics" in areas such as human rights and economics. They argue that China should take a hard line "and push hard for the world to accept it on its own terms," Lieberthal says.

The United States needs to encourage positive developments within China, he says. It also needs to rally other countries (notably Japan) "to articulate and convey to China's leaders the conduct expected of major powers" and to stand with Washington. The best that can be hoped for from a good policy is modest success, Lieberthal concludes. And in the absence of *any* policy, the worst is not too much to fear.

Kennan and the Cold War

"From World War to Cold War" by George F. Kennan and John Lukacs, in *American Heritage* (Dec. 1995), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

Revisionist historians have portrayed America's decision in 1947 to oppose the Soviet Union with a policy of "containment" as premature and provocative. Kennan contends, in an epistolary interview conducted by noted historian Lukacs, that, on the contrary, it took Americans too long to come to a realistic view of Joseph Stalin's regime.

When Kennan arrived in Moscow in 1944 after a seven-year absence to serve as deputy to U.S. ambassador Averell Harriman, he realized with some shock that the Soviet regime "was still indistinguishable from the one that had opposed in every way our policies of the pre-war period, that had entered into the cyni-

cal nonaggression pact with the Germans in 1939, and that had shown itself capable of abominable cruelties, little short of genocide," in areas under its control. Kennan did not dispute the need to keep giving the Soviet forces military support, but he saw no reason for "such elaborate courting of Soviet favor as was then going on, or for encouraging our public to look with such high hopes for successful collaboration with the Soviet regime after the war."

The failure of Stalin's regime to come to the aid of the Poles who rose up against the German occupiers in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising should have prompted the United

See No Evil

Fifty years ago, on March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his famous "iron curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri. Spencer Warren, head of a Washington public policy seminar program, recalls in the *National Interest* (Winter 1995-96) the torrent of criticism that greeted Churchill's warning.

In retrospect, it appears that [President Harry] Truman was using Churchill—with the latter's understanding—to crystallize opinion on behalf of a new American policy already taking effect. . . .

But Churchill's harsh and somber tone, and the breadth and detail with which he made his case—the first strong criticisms of Russia by a Western leader since the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941—brought down on him a torrent of criticism, thus restoring him temporarily to the position in which he had spent most of his career. . . .

Leading liberal newspapers and magazines . . . attacked Churchill for relying on the old power politics, endangering the UN, and wrongly blaming the Russians. . . .

For their part, conservative critics were more agitated by Churchill's proposal of a peacetime Anglo-American alliance than by his attacks on Soviet policy. Senator Taft (R-Ohio) agreed with much of Churchill's criticism of Russia, but opposed his proposed solution, maintaining that "it would be very unfortunate for the U.S. to enter into any military alliance with England, Russia, or any other country in time of peace."