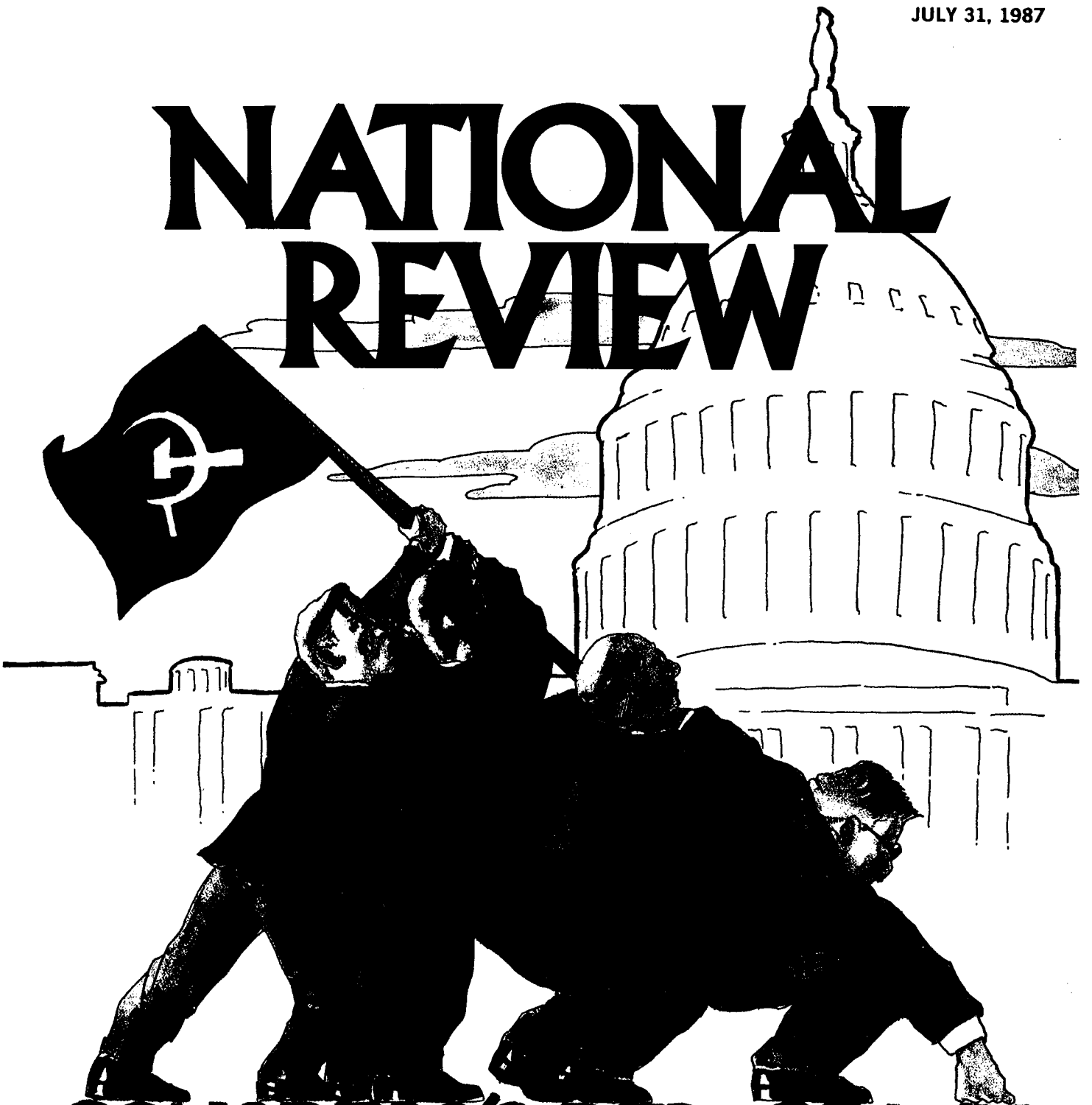


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CONGRESS'S RED ARMY

BY J. MICHAEL WALLER & JOSEPH SOBRAN



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THE COUNTRY IS said to be moving to the right, but you wouldn't know it by the Democrats. During the Reagan years they have moved sharply and quickly leftward.

The major media have largely ignored the change and in some ways have helped camouflage it. But it's palpable in myriad ways, nowhere more so than in Congress.

Consider George Crockett. The elderly Detroit Democrat, elected to Congress in 1980 at the age of 71, has a long public record of Communist fellow-traveling. During the 1940s, he was a law partner of Maurice Sugar, a Communist who had been booted out of the United Auto Workers by Walter Reuther. In 1946, Crockett was a sponsor of the Civil Rights Congress, a Communist front, and at about that time he joined the National Lawyers Guild, cited by a Congress different from today's as "the foremost legal bulwark of the Communist Party." (Crockett later became vice president of the Guild.) Crockett often represented Communists in court and before congressional committees. In 1949 he was legal counsel for 11 Communist Party leaders, including Gus Hall, charged with conspiring to teach the advocacy of the overthrow of the U.S. Government by force. They were convicted, and, as a result of his behavior at the trial, Crockett himself was sentenced to four months in jail for contempt of court.

On and on he went. In 1950 Crockett wrote a pamphlet defending the 11 jailed Communist leaders. In 1951 he led a petition drive charging the U.S. Government with "genocide" against American blacks. In 1952 he represented Communist witnesses before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (then led by Democrats), where he was admonished several times by committee counsel for his conduct. At about the same time, he sponsored a reception in support of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, then in prison awaiting execution for spying for the Soviet Union. In 1954, he again represented Communist witnesses before HUAC. The man kept busy.

Was he a Communist? He has never publicly said so, though the New York Civil Rights Congress described him as one of several "former Communist political prisoners." Well into the 1970s, Crockett was still a regular at major Communist social events.

At any rate his views haven't changed much. In 1983, during his second term in Congress, he was one of only two members (John Conyers, another Detroit Democrat, was the other) who pointedly abstained on a House resolution, which passed 416 to 0, condemning the Soviets'

shooting down of Korean Air Lines flight 007. In 1985, Crockett introduced a resolution extending "fraternal greetings" to the World Festival of Youth and Students, an organization identified in a 1985 State Department report as a Soviet front. In 1985 he actually defended the Soviets on the House floor during discussion of the killing of Major Arthur Nicholson Jr.; he voted against the resolution condemning the act.

With all this, and much more, on the record, the House Democrats this February made Crockett chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs—which helps guide Congress on such current topics as U.S. policy in Central America. He was picked over Dan Mica of Florida, who had more seniority and wanted the job—but Mica had supported the Contras, so he was out.

Crockett's chairmanship says more about his Democratic colleagues than it says about him. The man who once obstreperously represented Communists before a congressional committee has now been given a committee of his own.

No, Crockett hasn't changed; the Democrats have. He now fits comfortably on the Democratic continuum, which goes all the way to the far Left without a break.

The Iran-Contra hearings (which have already cost more money than the Contras got from the Iran arms sale) highlight a new fact of life: It is now anti-Communists, not Communists, who have to operate clandestinely and fear exposure by congressional investigators. While the Democrats eulogize Benjamin Linder, the leftist engineer killed by the Contras, as an "idealist," they damn Oliver North as a "zealot." The Contras themselves are damned as "terrorists" by Democrats who support the African National Congress, which burns people alive.

"The congressional center of gravity has swung sharply to the left in the past ten years," observes Henry Hyde, the Illinois Republican. He goes so far as to say that "Marxist thought" now enjoys "respectability" on Capitol Hill. After Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut gave the nationally televised "Democratic Response" to Ronald Reagan's 1983 address on Central America, a Soviet diplomat named Viktor Gonchar praised Dodd's reply as "a

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perfect Marxist-Leninist analysis." It's getting harder and harder for all sides to tell the Democratic line from the Soviet one.

Part of the reason for the Soviet-Democratic convergence is the Democrats' obsessive Reagan spite. Partisan fury has boiled over the normal restraints of patriotism. In 1984, ten House Democrats, including Majority Leader Jim Wright of Texas, wrote a now-notorious letter to Comandante Daniel Ortega pleading with the Sandinistas to apply a little cosmetic democracy, so that it wouldn't be quite so embarrassing to oppose "those responsible for supporting violence against your government [read: Ronald Reagan]."

Both Houses of Congress have hard cores of leftist ideologues. The Senate has Democrats like Dodd, Tom Harkin of Iowa, and John Kerry of Massachusetts. The House has Crockett, Conyers, and David Bonior of Michigan; Ron Dellums, Don Edwards, George Miller, and Mervyn Dymally of California; and Mickey Leland of Texas, who was quoted in a Houston newspaper in 1975 as saying: "My political philosophy is probably Marxist." This is only a sample; Robert Dornan, the California Republican, puts the number of "hard" leftists in the House at about two dozen. Not a huge number; but enough, given their stridency, unity, and activism, to set the tone.

They face very little opposition within their own party. William Ford, another Michigan Democrat, has called Crockett his friend since 1961 and describes him as "an old-fashioned liberal." As for Crockett's critics, Ford told the *Washington Post* that what they say is "crap . . . Commie-baiting." There is no sharp line separating the Left from the rest of the party. Many Democrats usually vote with the Crocketts and Dellumses on foreign-policy issues. "Jim Wright has been dragged so far to the left it's unbelievable," says one Republican congressional staffer.

At the moment, naturally, the congressional Left devotes its attention to Central America. While exclaiming against "private foreign policy," several Democrats have formed their own personal alliances with the Left in Central America and the Caribbean. After the U.S. invasion of Grenada, U.S. forces retrieved a letter from Dellums aide Carlottia Scott. It was addressed in the chummiest terms ("My Dearest," it began) to the Communist strongman Maurice Bishop, and it had a lot to say about Dellums. For instance: "Ron, as a political thinker, is the best around and Fidel will verify that in no uncertain terms. When matched against the best of them, Ron always comes out ahead (even with Fidel)." (Two of Dellums's aides have also had their remarks broadcast on Radio Havana.) Ron "is really hooked on you and Grenada and doesn't want anything to happen to building the Rev[ol]ution and making it strong. He really admires you as a person and even more so as a leader with courage and foresight, principle and integrity. Believe me, he doesn't make that kind

of statement often about anyone. The only other person that I know of that he expresses such admiration for is Fidel." (As for her own feelings, "I still love you madly.")

George Miller, Bonior, Kerry, and Harkin have held their own meetings with top Sandinista officials, from which U.S. embassy personnel were barred. Not that their alliance hasn't had its rough spots. In 1985, just after the House voted down \$27 million in aid to the Contras, Daniel Ortega flew to Moscow to celebrate the occasion with friends, thereby embarrassing the Democrats. Miller and Bonior flew to Managua to complain. According to Evans & Novak, they also advised the Sandinistas to hold out for just three years, by which time things might be better in Washington. The Sandinistas hold Miller in especially high esteem. When he visited Managua in 1982 with Dodd and then-Congressman Michael Barnes of Maryland, a private staff memo to Ortega assured him that all three were "friends of our revolution," but added that Miller "is much more progressive than Dodd and Barnes" and "wants to help us."

Back home, the Dem Left is in thick with the new network of proliferating peace-and-human-rights-in-Central-America groups, with the usual consistent ideological bent. Harkin is a trustee (along with Congressmen Don Bonker of Washington and Robert Garcia of New York) of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs; he serves, with the widow of the Chilean Communist and Cuban agent Orlando Letelier, on the advisory board of the Washington Office on Latin America; and he is close to the Institute for Policy Studies, to whom he has spoken of the need to place people "who share our beliefs on Central America" in the National Security Council and the Defense and State Departments. The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) boasts the support of Pat Schroeder of Colorado, Barbara Mikulski of Maryland (now a senator), Harkin, and Edward Markey and Gerry Studds of Massachusetts (not to mention Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, and Ed Asner). The National Conference on Nicaragua includes Dellums, Harkin, Edward Kennedy, Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia, and even a Republican, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon. Medical Aid to El Salvador, not to be confused with the Red Cross, has more than a dozen congressional sponsors, among them Harkin, Dellums, Conyers, Leland, Fauntroy, Dymally—and Crockett. According to a laudatory article in the May 28, 1983, *Guardian*, donations to Medical Aid fund "various projects in liberated areas of El Salvador, each supervised by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front/Democratic Revolutionary Front (FMLN/FDR)."

Pat Schroeder wrote a long fundraising letter for a pro-Sandinista group called Nicaragua Network in 1985. Later, when the group gained some notoriety, she and her aides said her name had been used without her authorization,

and, alternatively, that she had withdrawn her name after learning that Nicaragua Network wasn't "politically neutral"—a joke, that one, because she could hardly have failed to know what the outfit stood for if she'd read as much of its literature as she'd written. The truth is probably that she decided to soften her leftist ties when she started thinking of running for President.

David Bonior is co-chairman of Pax Americas, a political-action committee that supports congressional moves favorable to the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador. In 1986 Pax Americas found 37 congressmen, all Democrats, worthy of campaign contributions. Bonior himself got the biggest: \$5,000. Don Edwards got \$3,000. The rest got \$1,000 or less.

Connecting the dots in this manner is usually called imputing "guilt by association." But much depends on whether Communism is a matter of guilt. The Dem Left obviously doesn't regard it as such. It's a good question whether Crockett and his ilk would support any cause that *wasn't*, at least in their eyes, pro-Communist. They don't disown Communism, and other Democrats don't disown them.

But probably few if any on the Dem Left actually have secret Soviet ties. Most don't need them, and they have strong reasons to avoid them. They are, in their own lingo, "indigenous forces." Their own outlook drives them to oppose Ronald Reagan rather than the Soviet Union. Even in domestic policy they are drawn toward a socialist paradigm. If that draws them into alignment with the Soviets, they don't recoil.

Their attitude is less one of affinity than of sheer irresponsibility: They don't *care* if their conduct helps the Soviets. "They regard the United States as the cause of most of the world's troubles," says one House Republican. "So when it comes to things like arms control, they take essentially the Soviet position, again and again." They aren't taking their lead from the Soviets, but they wouldn't vote much differently if they did. It's as if the New Left had grown up and gone to Congress.

Consider Christopher Dodd. The son of the late anti-Communist Senator Thomas Dodd, he has avoided the positions that earned his father enemies. Young Dodd has been "progressive" with a vengeance, and has won himself the sort of media support his father never had. He is said to be close to Bianca Jagger, Mick's ex, who reportedly

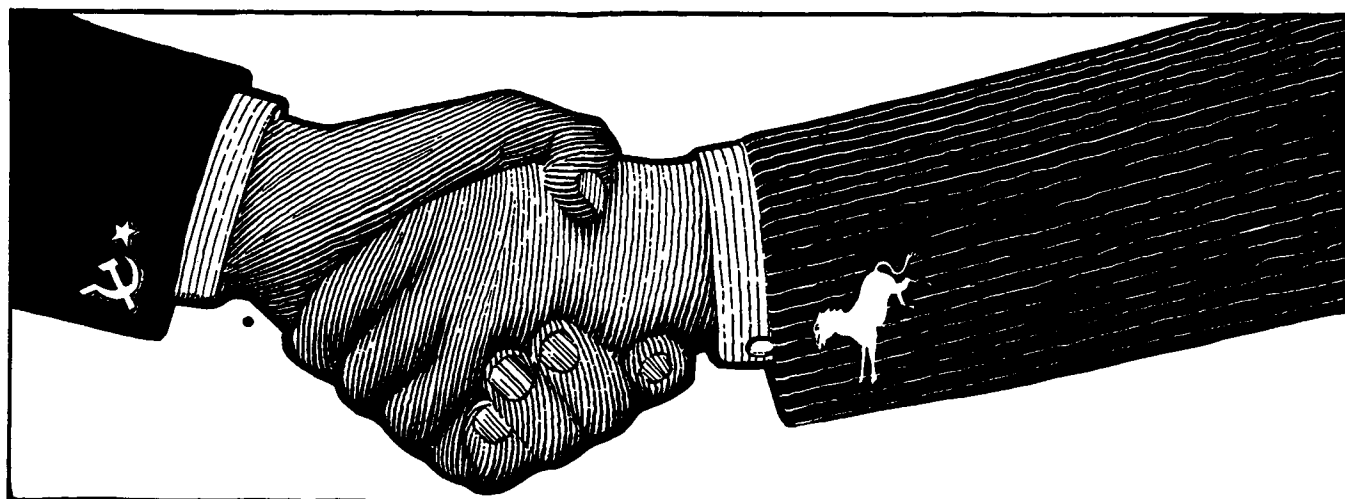
has used his office to carry on anti-Contra activities. According to Miguel Bolanos, a former intelligence officer in the Sandinista secret service, she still works for the Sandinistas. (A *New York Post* story, by the way, quotes intelligence sources as saying that a female agent working out of the Sandinistas' Washington embassy has had affairs with a senator and two congressmen, all Democrats.)

Another child of the Sixties, John Kerry, served in the Navy in Vietnam but returned to lead Vietnam Veterans against the War, which, shortly after he moved out of it and into politics, adopted radical positions including urging withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Since entering the Senate, he has engaged in his own Central American intrigues. One hobbyhorse has been his campaign to find evidence of Contra drug-smuggling. But while he was making his charges, it transpired that he and his staff had severely hindered an FBI probe of the illegal narcotics trade and had concealed evidence of drug dealing by the Sandinistas themselves.

Hypocrisy and duplicity abound when the Democrats discuss Central America. Edward Boland, the Massachusetts Democrat who sponsored *the* Boland Amendment (and four other Boland Amendments), thunders against Administration coverups. In 1982 his own staff carefully doctored a House Intelligence Committee report to conceal the participation of six House Democrats in activities sponsored by the Soviet-front World Peace Council, and its U.S. affiliate, the U.S. Peace Council. The six: Charles Rangel of New York, Dellums, Conyers, Dymally, Leland, and Edwards.

One Democrat who gets furious about shady contributions to the Contras is said to have taken a \$500 campaign contribution from a pair of Soviet spies on whose behalf he had interceded. Another was under FBI investigation about some classified State Department documents that found their way to the Sandinista embassy—though the inquiry was mysteriously suspended last year.

One thing is clear: These Democrats hardly deserve the epithet of "isolationist" that is often thrown at them. They care deeply what happens beyond our borders, and they work hard to affect the course of events. The charge actually flatters them: The old isolationists, after all, were patriots who wanted this country to maintain a virtuous aloofness from other people's broils. And once the country got into war, they did want it to win, a nuance worth observing.



Brian Cullman

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What has happened to the Democratic Party? Republicans marvel at the change during the Reagan era. "When I came to Congress in 1975," says Hyde, "Bella Abzug was a strident, ineffective voice from the far Left." If she were still around today, he quips, "she'd be the Majority Leader." Like many other Republicans, Georgia's Newt Gingrich compares the new breed of Democrats to the British Labour Party's "loony Left." He thinks Americans have been slow to see the change, but "it's finally sinking in that [these Democrats] really want to put Ollie North in jail and impeach Ronald Reagan."

This sort of ideological fanaticism is new to American politics. Dornan was amazed by the change when he returned to Congress in 1984 (he missed a term after an unsuccessful Senate bid in 1982). He notes that many freshmen in Congress, arriving from heartland statehouses, are "just appalled" at the radical rhetoric they're hearing on the House floor. "It's not just the old anti-Somoza talk. That was understandable for a while—Somoza was a beast. But now the Sandinistas have shown their true colors, and these guys *still* support them."

Why don't moderate Democrats pipe up? Gingrich thinks they're in "terror" of the Left. A staffer agrees: "Les Aspin took two steps away from them and they beat him to a pulp." Dornan is more inclined to ascribe the silence to opportunism: "They want those promotions and chairmanships."

Where are the Democrats heading? Jesse Jackson may not get the presidential nomination, but at the moment he's the front-runner. Whatever else he is, he's a shrewd operator, who is doing awfully well for a guy who's never held public office, and he keeps sailing leftward: Obviously he senses that that's where the ducks are. "It will be interesting to see," says Republican Congressman James Courter of New Jersey, "whether the Democratic convention picks a candidate whose foreign-policy views are identical with those of the Labour Party."

One problem the Democrats *don't* face is an adversary press. The major media ignore their excesses. Finding scandal on the right is investigative journalism; finding it on the left, though, would be McCarthyism. Besides, the media don't consider much of anything on the left scandalous. The *Washington Post* has recently done flattering profiles on Dodd, Leland, and Dellums in its Style section; the Dellums piece heralded his coming of age as a mainstream Democrat who has learned to bring his party with him, instead of alienating it with his earlier, more combative approach.

The *Post* also did a profile on Crockett when he got his chairmanship—a puff piece that played down his Communist past, naturally, making him sound like Uncle Ben with a social conscience. (He'd been jailed for his "spirited" defense of his clients.) "I've never collaborated with the Communist Party as such," Crockett told the *Post*. "Admittedly, some of the positions I've taken, dictated by the U.S. Constitution, have coincided with desires and positions of the Communist Party, like supporting freedom of speech."

Ann F. Lewis, national director of Americans for Democratic Action, called Crockett "the conscience of the Congress." Bonior called him "a strong, able leader who can pose the right questions" about Central America.

Even Hyde had a dry compliment for him: "He's no more of a security risk than anybody else on his side [of the aisle]."

An old comrade of Crockett's, Gus Hall, foresaw the current situation earlier than most. In 1979 Hall addressed the national convention of the Communist Party and exulted in the party's new success in forming coalitions with nonmembers. He noted "a decrease in expressions of anti-Communism." Communists, he observed, "do not have to fight to participate in these movements. In fact, we not only do not have to fight to participate, in most cases we are asked to join and help out." He said with satisfaction that Teddy Kennedy "is a lightning rod for the rising current of political independence."

Hall told the comrades not to worry if few of their new allies joined the party in a formal sense: "There is a blossoming resurgent Left with new qualities. It is much broader, with greater links to the mainstream."

Exactly. □

