

## Chapter VIII

### “Commander-in-Chief Jimmy Carter”

More than a year after the event, the *New York Times* reported that on January 21, 1977, Carter's first staff meeting had produced an urgent post-inaugural decision to test the “arrangements for a nuclear emergency,” and a week later National Security Advisor Brzezinski and his female secretary, playing the role of the President and the First Lady, rushed across the South Lawn of the White House to a Marine helicopter descending from the dark sky, struggling against the blustery winds near the force of a gale. Having picked them up, the helicopter took off for Mount Weather, the nuclear shelter in Virginia. Had the Secret Service men been quick enough, they might well have fired on the helicopter—“for all they knew, the flight was unauthorized.” It was “the first in a series of surprise alerts that President Carter and Mr. Brzezinski have sprung” to test the responsiveness of emergency procedures for evacuation in the event of nuclear attack.

Initially the procedures were “rusty, at best.” As they improved, Hugh A. Carter, Jr., the President's cousin and White House administrator, acted as the President's “stand-in.” In the course of an unspecified number of mock alerts,

*all of them called without warning  
several evacuations have since been  
carried out in less than scheduled  
time... The system now is working the  
way it should be.*

At the same time, high government officials underwent

training of how and where “to take to the hills,” that is, to the shelter capable of housing President Carter, his Cabinet, and 2,000 top officials. This report inspired a lonely letter “to the Editor” on “Carter’s Ark,” inquiring who was on the guest list, whether the wives were invited too, and asking “if the Federal Government gets us blown up with an atomic bomb, do we really want to save 2,000 of them?”

Pentagon officials could not recall any actual tests of emergency procedures by any recent President. They said that John F. Kennedy had “showed some interest in them in the first months of his administration,” and that the only full-scale evacuation test in recent memory was carried out “in 1955, in an era when the nation’s nuclear nerves were on edge.” Although the surprise alerts caught the military establishment unawares, the Joint Chiefs and other commanders became “enthusiastic” over Carter’s “keen interest.” They were “ecstatic” to have for the first time in years “a President who takes his role as Commander-in-Chief seriously.” Officers liked Carter’s frequent visits to the SAC headquarters and other command centers, and his desire to acquire “an operational sense.” The press reported that “in an attack, the National Command Authority would be activated, and that would give the President operational control of the armed forces,” and that Carter and Mr. Brzezinski had “made frequent telephone calls to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and key field commanders to make the military men familiar with their voices.” Early in 1978, the President visited the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon, where he “participated in a simulated crisis and spoke directly with American commanders in the field and at sea.

On June 24, 1978, a year and a half after inauguration, Carter observed the military show in central Texas, which was “the closest thing to real combat without being shot at.” The Army’s original estimate for the show was \$2 million, and the expenditure stirred political controversy because at that time Carter was taking an extremely hard line on inflation, denouncing government spending and waste and calling for across-the-board sacrifice. “We have

got to cut down the federal budget and I am determined to do so," he declared in a speech in Beaumont, Texas, the last stopover on his way to the military show. Carter seemed unfazed by the controversy and said that the military exercise was "valuable" for his "education as commander-in-chief" since "whatever expenditure of funds was involved was well worth it." He said that the show was designed to "familiarize" him with the nation's military capabilities.

"The President has become fascinated with political-military affairs and has taken to reading dense bureaucratic works in great detail," stated an Administration official. Reports have also cited Carter's memorandum to Defense Secretary Harold Brown, ordering a "searching organizational review" and warning that to get results, "often our personal involvement will be needed." Carter insisted on "simplifying the decision-making process," on increasing the "effectiveness of the command structure for the conduct of war, for peacetime activities and for crisis management," and on "reducing some military staffs with corresponding cuts in costs." Although Brown had fired a number of officials at the top of the civilian organization in the Pentagon, Carter wanted Brown to "go further." He also ordered Brown "to conduct a major review of contingency plans for waging a nuclear war against the Soviet Union," stating that the strategic doctrine inherited from past administrations was "outdated."

Carter's new approach was leaked to the press. Defense Secretary Brown was quoted repeating Carter's argument: "I do not think it at all likely that a limited strategic nuclear exchange would remain limited." The "outdated" doctrine announced early in 1974 by James Schlesinger, then Secretary of Defense, emphasized the flexibility of American retaliatory response providing options for a small scale as well as an all-out strike, but Brzezinski outlined a new plan for an all-out "nuclear strike."

It might appear that Carter is interested in protecting the maximum of Americans from nuclear attack. A year and a half after his inauguration, Carter in a secret White House

document adopted a “Program to Bolster Civil Defense in a Nuclear Attack.” The *New York Times* reported on November 13, 1978, that the major thrust of the program was “placed not on building underground shelters to protect civilians from nuclear explosions and fallouts, but on rapidly evacuating people from large cities in time of crisis,” and it was designed to protect as many as 140 million Americans in the event of a major war with the Soviet Union.” The option of building a large number of new shelters was ruled out because of “prohibitive costs.” The *New York Times* editorial “Mr. Carter’s Fallout Biscuits” ridiculed the program saying:

*The Kennedy planners preferred shelters, because they said, an evacuated population could not escape from radioactive fallout and because even in 1961 the warning time of a missile attack seemed insufficient for a drive across the George Washington Bridge.*

Another news item half a year later announced that civil defense plans had been worked out “state by state across the nation” and, as an example, cited Bradford, a sleepy town of 1,500 people in the rural heart of central New Hampshire. According to the plan of the Department of Defense’s Civil Preparedness Agency, Bradford was assigned to accommodate 4,450 people fleeing various New England population centers. Neither town officials nor residents of Bradford had known anything about the plan until reporters arrived to interview them. “I don’t know anything about that,” said Mrs. Best, when she was told that according to the evacuation plan her 12-room country inn would have to accommodate 498 refugees. “I suppose we could help, if it comes to that.” Champ Wright, who owns an unheated junk shop, was assigned to accommodate 90 refugees. “I’m not the one to turn anyone out in the

street,” he said. “But the place is so full of junk already you can’t get 20 customers in there on a summer afternoon.” The beauty parlor in Dorothy Brown’s home must accommodate 120 people, but whether or not she actually would be willing to let anybody in is unclear “since her reaction to unannounced visitors is to unleash her large and aggressive Airedale and bolt her door.”

David Hayden, New Hampshire civil defense planner, explained that

*When the plan is finished, emergency radio bulletins will be prepared, telling residents of a particular neighborhood, in Providence, for example, to report to a particular New Hampshire town, using a specified route.*

He acknowledged: “people ask us what about people who don’t have cars or get a flat tire or something.” His answer was, “They’ll die — there is no guarantee for everybody and we have to be concerned with the survivors.” Hayden added that it “will be a year or a year and a half before we get around telling these people.” This statement belongs to May 1979, which may mean that Carter had long ago decided to put in effect the evacuation program sometime between May and November 1980, the period between the end of the primaries and the election.

The Soviets, of course, scrutinize the timing of Carter’s programs and actions. Through their intelligence and inside sources, they learn more than any private individual can from the public record. They have enormous apparatus for analyzing scattered and generally overlooked American press reports, some of which could not but set Soviet nuclear nerves on edge.

On February 11, 1977, three weeks after his inauguration, Carter established another precedent as the first Chief

Executive ever to fly in the special Boeing 747 Airborne Command Post, the “Doomsday plane.” A photograph of him, surrounded by top generals, all leaning over strategic maps, was published with the following explanation:

*President Carter aboard the Flying Command Post that he would use in a nuclear crisis. From there he would control U.S. forces.*

On May 27, 1977 Carter and Rosalynn, accompanied by Admiral Hyman Rickover, went on a well-publicized cruise off the Florida coast aboard the nuclear submarine U.S.S. Los Angeles. A photograph released to the press shows Carter wearing a black baseball cap with a gold braid on the bill with the inscription, “Commander-in-Chief Jimmy Carter.” The purpose of the cruise, explained Carter, was “to get first-hand knowledge of American weapons and fighting men.” Carter was described as “elated” and “ebullient.” After the cruise, he made a brief speech in which he called for “increased efforts among the nations of the world to eliminate nuclear weapons,” but he also said that the submarine from which he had just emerged was capable of launching cruise missiles “whether they are equipped with nuclear or conventional warheads.”

On May 22, 1977 Carter delivered a speech at Notre Dame University. In a book *Jimmy Carter and American Fantasy* published later that year, Professor Lloyd De Mause, the Director of the Institute of Psychohistory, concluded that this speech, like many other Carter pronouncements, “bristles with the same kind of aggressive and fearful imagery, carefully hidden between noble phrases.” Soviet psychiatrists on the Politburo payroll read these analyses. But Soviet leaders must find Carter’s deeds even more threatening than his words.

During his 1976 campaign Carter asserted that previous Administrations overemphasized the Communist threat and

that Nixon and Ford allowed an “almost unbelievable absence of proper management in defense policy which, he insisted, was in “total chaos.” He promised to reduce the waste and cut the military budget by some 7 billion dollars. Once in office he indeed cancelled the B-1 bomber, proclaimed the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea and promised further military cuts. This pleased American “doves.” For a while the Soviets may have been pleased too by the analyses of W. R. Taylor, the editor of the authoritative annual Jane’s *All the World Aircraft*. In the 1977-78 issue Taylor wrote, “If our planet is subjected one day to the unthinkable horrors of the third world war, 1977 might be recorded as the year in which the seeds of defeat for the Western powers were sown, and that the Soviet leaders “must be surprised beyond belief that the U.S. President has disposed of the B-1 without asking any Soviet concession in return.”

During the 1976 campaign Carter accused Ford and Kissinger of “giving up too much and asking for too little.” Two months after scrapping the B-1, Carter suddenly requested \$20 million to study the conversion of the F-111 (TFX) fighter into a manned penetrator. Florida Democrat Robert Sikes, a B-1 sponsor, commented. “some people just felt that they had been taken by the B-1 being canceled, and then the F-111 surfacing.” Carter also abandoned his idea of a troop withdrawal from South Korea. But this and similar reversals of promised military “cuts” would hardly be the only reasons for the Soviets to conclude that Carter was not a naive “dove.”

Some American press reports may well have sent shivers down Soviet spines. Early in the Carter Administration the *New York Times* reported that Carter ruled “obsolete” the elaborate security system of codes and messages designed to authenticate a Presidential order for a nuclear strike. This discarded system had “a built-in check against any obvious irrational act by a President,” and had been approved by

former Presidents from Truman to Ford. They prudently enough

did not rule out the possibility of their growing senile or committing an irrational act. Former Presidents could not alone launch nuclear weapons— "at least two persons, often more," had to "cooperate in carrying out the order to fire." Carter considered this system outdated "because it is too complex." What exactly he did to "simplify" the system, the report did not reveal. The Soviets may have decided that Carter eliminated "one of the two keys" that had to be turned simultaneously in the old system, to cause a massive launch. Such a decision would be quite logical for a "naturally authoritarian person" who is "jealous of his power," and is "sure there is nothing wrong with him." After all, Miss Lillian said, "you know, Jimmy is perfect."

It is highly doubtful that the Soviets believed White House and Pentagon explanations for the false nuclear alerts on November 9, 1979, and June 3 and 6, 1980. "Computer malfunction" and a defective "46e item" in the early warning system could hardly seem plausible explanations for the Soviets in view of their awareness of Carter's "evacuation tests," "Doomsday plane" flights, and other instances of his acquiring a "sense of operational control" and gaining "valuable education as commander-in-chief." There had been only one in-stance of a false alert until Carter came along: in the mid-1950s a radar station "mistook a flock of geese for a Soviet bomber attack," but this error was quickly discovered and immediately explained. Protesting the false alert of November 9, 1979, Brezhnev sent Carter an angry note, complaining that the alert had "raised the risk of nuclear conflict." Although the note was not released to the press, the news report stated that White House officials "dismissed" Brezhnev's note saying

*the false alarm had not led the Pentagon to take any provocative military steps, such as launching strategic bombers toward Moscow.*

The Pentagon officials did acknowledge, however, that interceptors had been ordered into the air, nearly a hundred B-52 crews started their engines, land and submarine missiles placed in firing positions, and Carter's "Doomsday plane" prepared for takeoff. White House officials said that they were engaged in "discussions over... whether the Administration should respond to Mr. Brezhnev's comments." At the same time a Pentagon spokesman told reporters that the military authorities were "quite satisfied" with this response to the imagined threat. Their being "quite satisfied" could not but reinforce Soviet suspicion that the false alerts were in line with Carter's other "tests." Carter's foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia has run in seemingly opposite directions. On the one hand Carter the "dove" has been undermining American traditional allies, abandoning strategic areas to unchecked Soviet penetration by proxy, inviting Soviet meddling in internal affairs of pro-Western countries, and even tolerating their invasion of Afghanistan. On the other hand Carter the "hawk" moved boldly to establish full diplomatic relations and initiated a far-reaching military cooperation with China, which the Soviets see as a mortal threat to them. This double-faced, seemingly contradictory, policy does not make sense unless it is recognized as a monumental two-pronged provocation. Carter tempts and lures the Soviets to fill the power vacuums he creates for them, thus encouraging their traditional expansionism, and at the same time further stimulating their already extreme fear of China. The "dove" policy creates the impression that the Free World is being pushed into the corner by the Soviet's improving their strategic positions and threatening America's and her allies' vital interests. Such a policy conditions a belligerent

response to this threat and creates an emotional need to strike back at the Soviets, to call on Carter to take a “strong stand,” “get tough.” At a time of his choosing he may indeed turn around and get “tough,” as if in response both to the Soviet threat and to the popular demand. Carter’s policy toward China, besides provoking Soviet fears, also creates an impression of America acquiring a strong ally and a powerful “leverage,” as Brzezinski put it. The record of this policy of double provocation deserves a brief review.

In October 1977, Carter proclaimed American “neutrality” in the Horn of Africa conflict in which Soviet arms and Cuban troops ensured the victory of Ethiopia over pro-Western Somalia. In his February 17, 1978, news conference Carter said:

*The Soviets are shipping massive quantities of weapons into the Middle Eastern area now, into the Red Sea area, or Ethiopia, into Syria and Iraq, Libya. And we cannot abandon our own friends.*

While the Soviets drastically increased their support to various African “revolutionary” regimes and intensified their propaganda against South Africa, Carter intensified interference in South African affairs by hostile pronouncements on apartheid. Vice-President Mondale went as far as to announce that America would not intervene if South Africa would be subjected to military invasion from the outside. Since no combination of African countries can mount any threat to Pretoria without Soviet direct assistance, Mondale’s statement could only mean an inducement for the Soviets to intervene unchecked. For the Soviets, South Africa’s racial problems are nothing but a pretext for establishing their presence and perhaps dominance in that strategically and economically important

area. While the Soviets moved in by proxy— they used Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia—Andrew Young. announced that Cuban troops in Africa were a “stabilizing” factor and that they played a “constructive” role. Which was tempting if one was listening from behind the Kremlin walls to such strange statements.

Sizable groups of white South Africans who worked for decades for the abolition of apartheid have all but disintegrated in the wake of Carter’s “moral offensive.” He demanded immediate establishment of black majority rule. The ruling National Party, swelled by defection of whites from various liberal parties and groups, won an unprecedented landslide victory in the election of November 30, 1978. Colin Eglin, the leader of the Progressive-Federal Party, which had represented anti-apartheid, liberal-minded whites, stated,

*Without facing up to the realities of the situation, without giving mature consideration to the options for change, the Carter Administration rushed in where angels would have feared to tread. Its statements have given the impression that it is more concerned with posturing than reform.*

Andrew Young proclaimed the Administration’s goal of bringing about a “united front” of black African regimes against South Africa. He also, inside and outside South Africa, preached a trade boycott, displaying V-signs and clenched fists. Black African envoys in Washington protested, referring to Young as “a bull in a china shop.” One of them said: “in a world that must be handled with as great care as the defusing of a live bomb, this is not what we need.”

The Soviets realized that Carter was not inspired by a boundless desire to defend human rights, racial equality or

majority rule. They remembered that explosive rhetoric on human rights marked the beginning of the Carter Administration. Russian dissidents at that time felt encouraged. When the Soviets publicly rebuffed him, Carter muffled his appeal for human rights so that it became inaudible. A leading dissident, Irina Ginsburg, said simply, "Carter betrayed us." During the first year of Carter's Administration, the Soviet dissident movement suffered from the greatest KGB crackdown in years. Sakharov, to whom Carter had written a personal letter promising support, was exiled. Other dissidents were imprisoned, or forced to apply for emigration visas. "The picture is bleak." Carter's subsequent silence on this issue reinforced Soviet conviction that his apparent concern for human rights all over the world was intended to mask his provocative demagoguery. After all, Carter has not mentioned even once the colossal abuse of human rights in China.

How could the Soviets interpret Carter's sudden decision early in his Administration to withdraw all American troops from South Korea? This was clearly an invitation for the Communist North to invade the South. The withdrawal decision coincided with Washington criticism of the supposedly despotic and corrupt regime of President Park. The press, however, also mentioned that during the 18 years of Park's rule, South Korea miraculously achieved unprecedented prosperity and emerged from the backwardness of a traditionally poor agricultural society into the ranks of advanced industrial countries. It was also reported that only 200 political prisoners, most of them Communist agents or sympathizers, were in jails at the time of Park's assassination.

Since the assassination of Park, South Korean leaders found themselves subject to American pressure to "liberalize" and "broaden civilian rule." When the South Korean army quelled the rebellion in the provincial city of Kwangju, President Carter and Secretary Muskie were

confronted with a “problem”: “How can the United States steer Lieutenant General Chon Too Hwan away from military rule without undercutting South Korean security?” The substance of their “round the clock discussions” was leaked to the press: “if General Chon responded to Washington’s warnings and gave sign of a return to civilian rule, this should be praised,” but if he did not “the United States response would be critical.” A White House official was asked by reporters whether there was “an analogy between the South Korean situation and the one that existed in Iran under the Shah. In both cases pro-American, authoritarian regimes had come under criticism from the United States.” The official replied: “an analogy could develop if, as a result of American pressure, the South Korean Government and society erupted in anarchy.”

The analogy must be traced to the collapse under Carter’s pressure of the Somoza Government in Nicaragua. Somoza’s successors were the Sandinista guerrillas, who, playing the role of Cuban and Soviet puppets, plunged that small country into a gigantic bloodbath. William Safire reported that Carter personally pleaded with South American leaders to help him topple Somoza. When Carter was told that the downfall of Somoza would lead to a Communist takeover and start a chain-reaction of Cuban type insurrections south of American borders, he, as if he did not hear the argument, said, “Gee, you got to help me get rid of Somoza.” After leaving Nicaragua, Somoza called Carter a “murderer” and blamed him for the Communist takeover predicting that the Communist domination of South America “will soon extend right up to the border of the United States.”

During the 1976 campaign Carter stated that he would not intervene to prevent a Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia. The death of President Tito offered the Soviets an opportunity to subvert this neutral country. Carter’s failure to attend Tito’s funeral was widely interpreted as his disinterest in Yugoslavia’s fate. The European press was virtually

unanimous in describing Carter's conspicuous absence in Belgrade as an encouragement of the Soviet thrust into Yugoslavia, and as a provocation that might well strengthen the Soviet assumption that Carter indeed will not act to safeguard the independence of a country which is so vital to the defense of Europe. The Times of London said that Carter's decision not to come to Tito's funeral "is unwise for reasons which are so clear that the failure of the White House to see them must deepen the conviction that the United States is led by a man who is not just muddled but in some ways blind to whole areas of reality."

The reality today is that Iran is falling to pieces as the Soviets watch with avid anticipation, calculating the right moment to pick them up. Thailand is threatened. Pakistan is insulted by Carter's 400 million "peanuts" offer of military aid and hopelessly bending under Soviet pressure from next-door Afghanistan and from India, which is rapidly moving into the position of a new Soviet ally. Carter supports this by offering to supply India with nuclear fuel. Carter's policy toward China deserves special consideration. Fear of China is pervasive both among the Soviet people and leaders. Carter's sudden rush to initiate diplomatic relations and military cooperation with Peking could not but aggravate Soviet anxiety to the point of paranoia. National Security adviser Brzezinski openly advocates a "nuclear strike plan" designed to "exploit potential Soviet fears" and to make "a target of Russian troops in the Far East so that the Soviet Union would be more vulnerable to attack from China." Brzezinski talks about "playing a China card" and using China as "leverage." The shipment of military hardware to China will not substantially improve Chinese "leverage" as a factor in Soviet-American confrontation but only provoke a Soviet preemptive strike against China, leaving America with a choice between standing idly by or fighting a nuclear war with the Soviets. In case of such a strike China would prove to be not an American leverage but a liability.

During the Summit II in June 1973, according to Nixon in his memoirs, Brezhnev asked him whether America was “contemplating some secret military arrangement, possibly a mutual defense treaty, with China.” Nixon said it was not the American intention and that “it would be at least twenty years before the Chinese would acquire sufficient nuclear capability to risk an aggressive action against the Soviet Union

Brezhnev disagreed and said:

*Ten, in ten years, they will have weapons equal to what we have now. We will be further advanced by then but we must bring home to them that this cannot go on. In 1963, during our Party Congress, I remember Mao said : 'Let 40 million Chinese die ; 300 million will be left' such is the psychology of the man.'*

Brezhnev was certain that the entire Chinese leadership was instinctively aggressive. At the end of the meeting Brezhnev urged as diplomatically as his obviously strong feelings allowed that we do not enter into any military agreement with China. He asserted that the Soviets had no intention of attacking China. But if China had a military agreement with the United States, he said, “that would confuse the issue.”

Carter confused the issue. He threatened Soviet legitimate security interests. He entered into a military alliance with China in all but name. This makes the Soviet position today quite different from the one they found themselves in at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. Khrushchev did not perceive Kennedy as a provocateur. During the Vienna Summit in 1961 he saw John Kennedy hurrying across reception hail toward him with an

outstretched hand. He was surprised at Kennedy's agreeing to the sham "neutralization" of Laos, accepting the Berlin wall and then using Cuban exiles in the Bay of Pigs landing. When he found out that Kennedy had promised American air cover and support to those exiles and suddenly backed out, allowing Castro to, round them up only 90 miles away from American shores, Khrushchev was simply astonished. He saw in Kennedy a naive, muddled man, a pushover. It was natural for him to assume that he could get away even with the introduction of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, thus suddenly acquiring an immense strategic advantage for blackmail. This proved too much even for Kennedy.

I arrived in this country in April 1962. I studied Kennedy and considered his policy dangerously naive but not a calculated provocation. I was afraid, nevertheless, that the Cuban missile crisis might escalate into a nuclear war. Apparently, Khrushchev backed down, because the vital security interests of Russia were not threatened and because at that time America was much stronger militarily than Russia. It is doubtful that now Brezhnev would retreat if Carter at some point should challenge the Soviets in Afghanistan, Iran, or China. Mostly because of Carter's policy towards China, the Soviets dismiss the notion of him as a naive man and see in him a provocateur promoting confrontation and setting the stage for a war which the Soviets, no matter what they do, will have to fight. This perception makes intelligible the Soviet move into Afghanistan, their pressure on Pakistan and India, their support of Vietnam's conquest of Cambodia, attacks on Thailand. The Soviets encircle China. The logic of their aggressive moves is simple enough— if Carter instigates a Soviet-Chinese confrontation, they had better establish strategically advanced positions both vis-à-vis China and the U.S.

The Soviets engineered the Communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, precisely at the time when they

detected the “China card” in Carter’s deck. Their invasion took place in December 1979 when they became alarmed by growing signs of American-Chinese military cooperation. Justifying the invasion at the meeting of the Central Committee, Brezhnev ridiculed the reasons cited by Western experts on Russia as explanations for the Soviet move into Afghanistan. “What allegations were not made against the Soviet Union! The desire to reach warm seas, the intention to get hold of oil -of others, etc.” He stopped short of mentioning the most important reason, only occasionally aired in the West: the encirclement of China. Brezhnev, however, accused “the ruling circles of the United States as well as China” of an “armed aggression, to prevent the Afghans from building a new life.... We had no choice but to send troops.” Referring to the rapidly multiplying signs of American military cooperation with China, Brezhnev said, “events have confirmed that this was the only correct decision.”

U.S. *News & World Report*’s Assistant Editor, Joseph Fromm, wrote recently:

*Never in 35 years of covering the international scene have I had such universal disdain for the competence of an American President or despair over American leadership.... The worry is that the President may now use military power impetuously after having scorned the use of armed force of any kind for three years.*

Flora Lewis’s report, “Soviet ‘Peace Offensive’: Mood in Europe Grows Fearful,” describes the growing perception in Europe that “the risk is now judged to be one of stumbling, unwittingly, into an uncontrollable train of events that could lead to disaster no one intends.” After a White House “extraordinary closed meeting” on April 23,

1980, Hendrik Herzberger, Carter's chief speechwriter, said he had "an uneasy feeling that we're slipping down a slippery slope toward a military confrontation." The meeting was initiated by Hamilton Jordan who later said: "some of the staff members had the erroneous impression that the President had already made a decision to exercise an option to mine or put a naval blockade around Iran."

Other aides expressed apprehensions about Carter's threat of military action. "We may be painting ourselves into a corner," said one. Another expressed "deep concern" about Carter's ability to "exercise restrained and measured response" and pointed to "political pressures" that are building and are "widely felt here among his principal advisers" for Carter "to do something more dramatic." Brzezinski called the leaks a sickening business" and described the discussion of military action as "slightly academic" and "just reaction to the press pumping up the issue of military action." He added, however, that he did not question the accuracy of the aides' accounts, but refused to comment on Hertzberg's fears of "slipping down a slippery road." He said only, "It's a loaded term."

Has the slipping down resulted from Carter's stumbling, unwittingly, into an uncontrollable train of events that could lead to a disaster no one intends, or has Carter carefully orchestrated and "tied" it to his campaign plans? Did Carter provoke the turmoil in order to instigate a war if the polls showed that he was likely ~—to be voted out of "his house"? When Nixon was accused by the media of diverting attention from Watergate by instigating a Middle East war and ordering a military alert in October 1973, this accusation appeared quite credible to Nixon critics despite the lack of evidence. Carter's record, on the contrary, abounds with evidence.

Carter suffered emotional collapse when he lost the Georgia primary campaign in 1966. Miss Lillian warned that he "must win or bust." She said that Jimmy was

ruthless, would “go through hell to get what he wants.” Jimmy’s own warning is, perhaps, the most telling:

*I am pretty rigid. It's been very difficult for me to compromise when I believe in something deeply. I generally prefer to take it to the public, to fight it out to the last vote, and if I go down, I go down in flames.*

Muskie said in May 1980 that Carter had been “tying” the hostage crisis “to his own campaign plans.” Shirley Temple Black, in a New Haven address, stated that a war might be Carter’s only way to political survival. Flora Lewis reported in *The New York Times* that foreign leaders are increasingly nervous in their recognition that Carter is a security risk and that we are on our way to war. The *Janeway Letter* advised its Wall Street subscribers that Carter is “a desperado armed with a Bible wrapped in the flag” and that his “candidacy would benefit from delaying his role change to Commander-in-Chief until after the conventions.”

Living in Russia years ago I was afraid of expressing my views. I also dread to do it now, but for different reasons. The monstrosity of what I see coming is unsayable. But I have lived with this dreadful vision for the past several years, and I feel I must now go out on a limb to say it. Had Carter lost the 1980 primary campaign the world would have been at war by the time of the conventions. But having assured his convention coronation, Carter can afford to weigh his chances for election for a few more months. If the odds are not in his favor, he may well punish this country with a nuclear war for not submitting voluntarily to his authority.

On June 18, 1980, Lieutenant General Paul Kelly, the Commander of the recently created Rapid Deployment

Force, told reporters that he would be ready to deploy it by mid-July. He outlined the “pre-emptive strategy” of dispatching his force “before” the enemy attack, thus giving the Soviet leaders “a problem of a different magnitude,” and force them “to decide whether to confront American ground forces directly.” General Kelly was unable to answer two questions posed by the reporters: “Would an American President defy precedent to make such a decision before an enemy attack, and what would be the reaction of Congress, which must be consulted under the War Powers Act?”

I doubt that Carter would consult Congress or anybody before going down in flames and dragging humanity along with him. I have a horrible vision: 140 million escapees stampeding on the way to the George Washington Bridge and other “specified routes,” while our American Peter’ Verkhovensky takes to “the hills” or takes off in his “Doomsday plane,” leaving behind the “burning town” with its “crazed people.” And Barbara Walter’s plea, “be wise with us ... be good to us” does not ring in his ears.

*A hand rules pity as a hand rules  
heaven; Hands have no tears to  
flow.*