

Letters

DN editorial misses most important point

Your editorial on the SALT II treaty (DN, Dec. 1) misses the most important point.

Although it is true that SALT II was never ratified, President Reagan announced in May 1982 that the United States would take no actions that "undercut" the treaty as long as the Soviets exercised equal restraint. Adoption of this policy represented tacit admission that the terms of the treaty benefited the United States. Without any legal obligation, both sides have been complying with the treaty all this time. (The administration has accused the Soviets of several violations, but the charges are questionable and the alleged violations are relatively minor.) You are therefore incorrect in

saying that the president made it clear before the 1984 election that he had no intention of abiding by the terms of the treaty.

There is no military justification for the United States breaking through the SALT II ceilings. In fact, doing so requires us to spend a lot of money on refurbishing an old Poseidon submarine, an action the Navy is not enthusiastic about. By simply retiring that submarine we would have stayed within the ceiling, with no loss in U.S. security.

The SALT II restrictions provided for mutual restraint to be followed while reductions were being negotiated. By abandoning those restraints the president has invited the Soviets to do the

same. It is generally agreed that, at least in the short term, the actions they can take are more significant strategically than our retention of the submarine. Thus, even if the Soviets are guilty of the violations charged, the U.S. action makes no sense as a response.

The ill-advised decision by the president is not irreversible: We can still retire the old Poseidon and return to compliance. It is reported that Congress may bring that about by withholding funds for the required refurbishing. The president would do better to make the move on his own.

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Daily Nebraskan wrong on Solidarity editorial

"America forgets Solidarity," and the Daily Nebraskan forgets the importance of accuracy and thorough research. The editorial, "U.S., Polish Trade," (DN, Nov. 14), criticizes the American government for the recent attempts to remove the economic sanctions imposed on Poland in 1981. The editorial says that what triggered this decision was the Polish government's September decision to release all its political prisoners. So far, so good. Then the DN claims that "a government-backed Catholic newspaper in Poland suggested the U.S. is trying to find a way to justify removal of sanctions. . ."

Apart from the fact that it is bad journalism to quote sources without acknowledging them by name, it is even worse to distort the facts. Namely, there is only one Catholic newspaper in Poland, Tygodnik Powszechny (Everybody's Weekly), published in Cracow, and anybody who feels qualified to write strong opinions about Polish issues should know that Tygodnik is not backed by the government; on the contrary, it is one of the more liberal and independent newspapers, called by the November Atlantic Monthly "the only free newspaper from Berlin to Vladivostok."

Not only did the DN forget to check the source and its profile, he or she also decided to misrepresent the facts behind the issue. According to the article, this Catholic newspaper claims that "the U.S. has lost its main argument for sanctions because of the amnesty for political prisoners."

I subscribe to Tygodnik Powszechny and can find no such quote. If there is one, I suspect it was taken out of context. What the DN should have mentioned is the front page "Statement" published in Tygodnik on Oct. 10, signed by Lech Walesa, seven other Solidarity leaders, and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Jerzy Turowicz, in which they express their concern for the worsening of the economic situation in Poland and suggest that all the Polish people, regardless of their ideological or political affiliations, should consider the task of improving the economy the most important one.

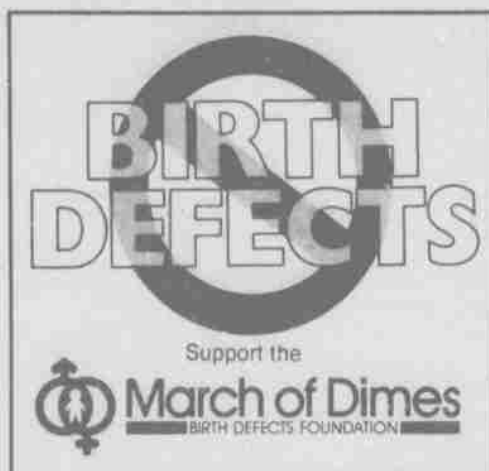
They go on to say that Poland is unable to overcome the crisis without any assistance from the outside, and that "the president of the United States can play an important role by lifting the remaining sanctions. That would mean the reinstatement of the most-favored-nation trading status, as well as access to financial credits. . ." (my translation). The leader of Solidarity is pleading for removal of the sanctions, and still the DN knows better what's good for the Polish people, for the American people, for Solidarity, and for Walesa himself (since he, apparently, doesn't know what he wants).

I was in Poland in December of 1981, and I happened to attend the press conference organized after the U.S. imposed its sanctions. The Polish government spokesman, Jerzy Urban, when asked about the impact of sanctions on the government, answered that the officials are not worried about their economic situation, since they will always be able to feed themselves. The first repercussion of the sanctions was the collapse of poultry farms, which were dependent on American fodder; soon baked chicken became a

legend and scrambled eggs a dream from the glorious past. And so it goes.

The DN is right in saying that America shouldn't forget Solidarity. But nor should ill-informed editorial writers arrogantly assume they know better than the leaders of Solidarity itself what should be done to show support of the movement. And right now, what should be done is to lift the sanctions.

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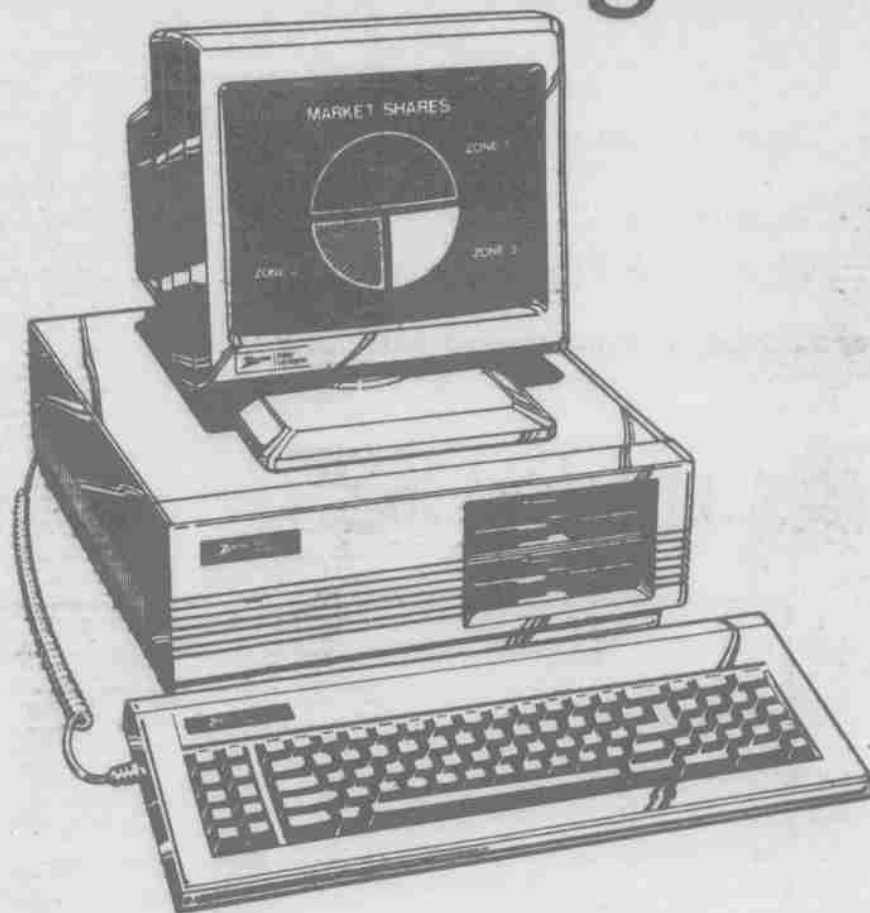
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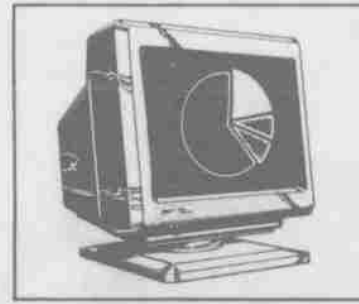
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