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Letter from an American Supporter in Norway to Geraldine Ferraro

Geraldine Ferraro

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You remember the Kissinger-Nixon madman game; Reagan is professional where Nixon was amateur, outmaneuvering Nixon with his special SENILE-MAN GAME, using senility and/or the pretense of senility (and well-mixed so who could distinguish?) as a mask, while his buddies use his senility as well as his other charming features to mask their own noxious special interests and prejudices, and note that it cuts both ways: Moscow might very well get from Reagan the aged what it might not from Reagan the fit, and as for our allies, can they feel secure with a doddering hand at the red button? and can we feel secure that Reagan won't let foreign non-Moscow special interests as well take advantage? and as to human rights in the United States, Reagan will doubtless do quite the reverse of standing up for the Bill of Rights and other features of the Constitution odious to jingoists and legatees of Joseph McCarthy. Today Grenada, tomorrow Poland. Today Liberation Theologists, tomorrow anything left of Jesse Helms.

I imagine a cartoon in three parts entitled "the buck stops here": in the first picture we see Reagan at a large desk in front of two windows open to a view of a lawn; he is surrounded by allegorical persons representing special interests domestic and foreign plus Moscow; on the desk are a few shell games he is about to manipulate; he looks alert; the shell games are also allegorically marked. In the second picture he is dozing in the chair, a cool person has drawn one shade and an fbi person the other, while the special interest figures are furtively reshuffling the shells. In the third picture all is as in the first picture with the addition of approving faces representing citizens domestic and foreign viewing through the windows. Perhaps a grim-reaper might be fitted in —- sort of a Halloween cartoon.

May I refer you also to the Paul Bowles story "The Little House" — about an evil person who escapes due to obvious senility. It is an old, but not senile dodge, rather like having an eye patch at the battle of Copenhagen; what? Nothing against Nelson, mind you; quite the contrary: Nelson had to deal not only with the enemy but also with senile co-commanders over him— it is now as then necessary to shunt out such walking dead hands of the past, flexibility and delicate subtlety of awareness and response in complex conditions have not been the hallmark of the aged figureheads we have observed: Franco, Mao, Stalin, Khomenei, are these extreme cases? Is Dung an exception, or is he rather following through plans laid earlier? Indeed, is it not a characteristic of states monolithic and atrophying to have a Reagan bound to the mast? Must the United States imitate The Wreck of the Hesperus?

In the fervent hope that Reagan loses, we must be ready to watch his henchmen assiduously until inauguration day, and look out for booby-trapped policies (like Ike's sweet Bay of Pigs for JFK, and Kissinger's Shah for Carter), and if the American people fail to eject Reagan, we must be prepared with a predominance of eagle-eyed legislators on Capitol Hill.

*(And even more dangerous*)