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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 30, 1982

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MEMORANDUM

The attached is a first draft for the meeting next Thursday, August 5th, on political action. I would appreciate your suggestions for changes by close of business Monday, August 2.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mark Palmer'.

Mark Palmer

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Agenda for Meeting on Political Action

August 5, 1982

I. Concept and Current Capabilities

- A. Foreign policy and national security role of political action (Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger)
- B. Case history of what can be done by private and government efforts--Portugal (Deputy Secretary Carlucci)
- C. Need for comprehensive capabilities--covert action but also U.S. trade unions, political parties, foundations, government initiatives and programs to do campaigns, infrastructure building, etc. (Director Casey)
- D. Information programs (Director Wick and Chairman Shakespeare)
- E. President's perspective and role (Judge Clark)

II. The Future

- A. Priority to be given political action
- B. Near-term needs
 - 1. FY '83 funding for radios
 - 2. Moving bipartisan foundation ahead
 - 3. USG organizational structure (USICA keeps lead on information and NSPG remains intact; NSC leads on overall political action; all agencies examine internal structures/capabilities for giving high priority to political action.)
- C. Long-term needs
 - 1. NSSD on political action (policy strategy and permanent solution to funding).

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SECRET/SENSITIVEPolitical ActionI. The Concept of Political Action

The Soviet Union has a strategically oriented, heavily-funded, professional program of "political action"--everything from launching innumerable policy initiatives, to staging peace campaigns, to training, organizing and financing political cadre for takeovers in the Third World, and even in Europe. For years they have been on the political (as well as military) offensive and the results are all around us.

The atheistic Soviet Union organizes conferences on religion and peace (attracting and manipulating men of integrity like Billy Graham), while no one in the US Government is even in systematic contact with most of the leaders of the world's great religions -- much less organizing conferences on our common agenda. "Peace" demonstrations are launched against America rather than those who invade Afghanistan and use "yellow rain". Those in an unstable Third World willing to risk their lives for political objectives tend to be Marxist-Leninists rather than pro-Western, democratic forces. The U.S. has to rely on the veto at the United Nations, where once that was the Soviet Union's role. Governments are afraid of being too closely associated with the "reactionary" United States; even major Allies distance themselves from us on "progressive" issues like El Salvador.

All this is the product of decades of systematic political action by the Soviets and relative political inaction by the United States. They have recognized that international politics is an extension of domestic politics -- a struggle to appeal to people's sense of justice, their fears and hopes, in other words, a political competition. This can be done only by offering people a political program and taking concrete steps to organize them, and not simply by reacting to, or criticizing, the program of others.

The United States has had bits and pieces of the capability to carry out political action. But some of our capabilities have declined. And we have never had a comprehensive, integrated, sustained capacity for political offensives. We tend to live day-to-day, to focus on crises others have created, and not to launch and sustain our own policy offensives.

Even some of our European allies understand the importance of practical political action as an element of international power better than we do. For example, Western European governments and parties sent money and professionals in a successful effort to build democratic forces to the point where they could prevent a communist takeover in Portugal.

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European parties have long been organized to help political friends. For example, the West Germans, through their four federally funded and party-affiliated political institutes, have full-time representatives in certain Third World countries who conduct political training and give financial support. They do this entirely openly and thus effectively, and their activities are not considered illegitimate interference in other nations' affairs.

The United States is largely out of the picture. Unlike member parties of the Socialist International and of course the Communists, our political parties have no network of international ties to struggling pro-Western democratic forces and offer no assistance. The CIA's current political support efforts are a pale shadow of their programs in the 1950's, and they are inherently hampered by their covert nature. Only the AFL-CIO conducts significant programs, but they are restricted to helping unions and labor leaders.

Furthermore, the Europeans are just as derelict as we in terms of efforts designed to help democratic forces in communist countries. There isn't even much study being done of how communist regimes can be changed -- even though it is clear: that the potential exists (witness Solidarity, Yugoslavia, thousands fleeing Cuba, etc.); that we will always be on the defensive if the political competition is played on our side of the court alone; and even more fundamentally that we will never have a permanent, stable peace until these systems are transformed from armed-camps to democracies.

II. Existing Resources and Programs

Obviously as a government we cannot and should not simply emulate Soviet methods. Nor will our political parties be able in the foreseeable future to play the international role of European parties. But there is much that we can do.

American political action can combine: a political program based on democracy, economic growth, security and peace; Presidential policy initiatives to dramatize each element of this program; mobilization of private forces in the U.S. and abroad (unions, parties, youth, church, business, etc.); international campaigns on issues like Afghanistan and Poland; political training, organization and financial support for pro-Western forces; covert political action programs; USICA communications efforts, and other steps.

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Since this Administration came into office, we each have taken steps to put America on the political offensive.

- o The President's November 18 speech on arms control timed to preempt Brezhnev in Bonn was a classic example of a "political action" with major impact.
- o His speech to Parliament launched a major effort to support democratic movements in communist and non-communist countries around the world.
- o State and the NSC, working with the European Parliament and the Congress, put together International Afghanistan Day. We have established on-going interagency working groups and programs to: shape Europe attitudes, expose Soviet active measures, deal with the nuclear freeze issue, and inform the world on Central America.
- o The Defense Department got out an excellent booklet on Soviet military power. All of us have been giving speeches on the Soviet threat.
- o USICA has undertaken path-breaking initiatives through the use of television ("Let Poland be Poland") and new vigor in getting out information about our policies and the Soviet Union.
- o BIB and VOA are working with all of us on dramatically modernizing the broadcasting capabilities of RFE/RL and VOA.

This is a solid start, but much more needs to be done.

-- Within the government, we are not yet staffed and organized to conduct effective political action. We now have a sound structure on the information side under Charlie Wick's leadership. But we are weak in our ability to generate political initiatives and conduct political campaigns, using overt and covert resources and combining government and private efforts here and abroad.

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-- The Soviet budget for these activities is around \$4-5 billion. American political action is a critical contribution to our national security and deserves funds on the same priority as national defense. For example our radios play a major role in encouraging peaceful change in Eastern Europe, weakening the unity of the Warsaw Pact and compelling the Soviet Union to devote enormous military resources to policing its own allies and own people. The cost of RFE/RL is less than one B-1 bomber.

-- We lack the kind of government-funded, but private political foundations and programs which the Germans have and which could conduct political training, organizing and provide financial support.

As Soviet dissident Lev Kopelev has said: Soviets put in ring heavy boxer with big muscles; America puts in tiny ballet dancer.

III. What Can Be Done

Going on the international political offensive has the potential of being the major mark the Reagan Administration can make on the history of America's role in the world. It can be the vehicle for reforging a domestic foreign policy consensus on the basis of traditional American values - a consensus that the Carter human rights policy attempted to reestablish but failed, due to its policy of moral double standard. An American political offensive can underscore the continuing vitality of the ideals of freedom and democratic-capitalism, ideals which can capture the imaginations of the world's millions -- if we only hold them forth for all to see.

Organizing ourselves to conduct such an offensive and providing resources must be among our highest priorities. We must admit that the State Department has not yet been geared up to the enormity of this task. Our regional bureaus all too often operate in a reactive mode with traditional diplomatic concerns rather than broader political strategy foremost on their minds.

Nevertheless, we have begun to make some constructive changes. We have a small core of political action officers in Under Secretary's Eagleburger's office. And we are considering the establishment within State of a substantially larger and permanent mechanism for political action. The sole purpose of this staff would be to keep the U.S. on the political offensive, [redacted] ICA and the other agencies from the perspective of influencing foreign publics: a perspective less encumbered by the traditional diplomatic concerns of not offending State's usual constituency -- foreign governments.

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We already have the interagency groups on specific areas for political action which we mentioned earlier, and should consider the formation of new ones where needed.

In the same vein, we need high-level mechanisms to maximize our common potential. We already have the information SIG which Charlie Wick chairs, and the NSPG for covert action. Both are critical and obviously should continue. But we need a central place to coordinate the daily aspects of our overall political action programs. The NSC seems the logical choice -- particularly with its recently strengthened staff in this field. We also believe that a periodic review of the overall political action effort would be useful (policy initiatives-information-covert action-private sector). We could consider whether we have succeeded in shifting from a reactive mode to a broad political offensive, and what are our priorities for future efforts and resources. The Under Secretary for Political Affairs seems to us the logical person to call together such a political action group.

We also need to develop government-private sector links and mechanisms. The most important of the President's initiatives in this area is the establishment of a U.S. political foundation and programs. This has strong bipartisan support including Lane Kirkland, Chuck Manatt and other Democratic Party leaders, the Chamber of Commerce and owes much to Bill Brock's efforts over the years. Pete McPherson has found some USAID money for the study to establish the foundation. Even the "New York Times" has called for the establishment of such a foundation. But we need to move ahead now with the study.

We want to offer political aid, training and organization to democratic forces struggling for influence in communist and non-communist countries alike. Next time a Portugal is ready for political change, we need not rely largely on the German foundations to provide a politically organized, pro-Western, democratic alternative to a communist takeover.

* * * * *

We know that members of our staff have been discussing "political action" for months with serious interest, a common perception that we were moving in the right direction but that much more needed to be done. That is why we thought it would be useful to have a meeting at a senior level. You undoubtedly will have additional ideas and proposals to make. We look forward to the discussion.

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