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# Missionaries for Democracy: U.S. Aid for Global Pluralism

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WASHINGTON, May 31 — For several years after Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in 1979, a former editor and Information Minister in Kabul tried to get money to restore the village school system destroyed in rebel-held areas of his country.

The Afghan, Sabahuddin Kushkaki, applied unsuccessfully to the United States Agency for International Development and to major American private foundations. Every one turned him down, thinking the war would be short.

Then, as the fighting continued, he and some friends happened upon an organization with the right combination of Government money, bureaucratic flexibility and anti-Communist commitment — the National Endowment for Democracy.

Using Federal money, it provided \$180,845 to train teachers, conduct literacy courses for rebel fighters, reopen some schools and publish new textbooks with unflattering accounts of the Soviet role in Afghan history. "They have been giving us help without any strings attached," Mr. Kushkaki said on a recent visit to Washington.

## Public Money, Private Interests

This is part of an unusual worldwide campaign, billed as a promotion of democracy and free enterprise, which mixes public funds and private interests. Conceived in a new spirit of ideological confidence in the United States, the effort is described by some of those involved as an expression of the "Reagan Doctrine," which envisions an aggressive American policy in fostering a move toward democracy in the third world. After three years, the program has now taken a clear shape.

The National Endowment for Democracy, a private group created for the purpose, has channeled a total of \$53.7 million in Government money to foreign political parties, labor unions, newspapers, magazines, book publishers and other institutions in countries where democracy is deemed fragile or nonexistent.

The Federal money is being used for such undertakings as helping the Soli-

darity labor union print underground publications in Poland, buying materials for an opposition newspaper in Nicaragua, bolstering the opposition in South Korea, aiding a party in Northern Ireland that is a member of the Socialist International and getting out the vote in Grenada and Latin American countries.

Money is also going to monitor and publicize human-rights abuses by Vietnam, for union-organizing in the Philippines and for public-opinion surveys to help political parties opposing the right-wing dictatorship in Chile.

"We're engaged in almost missionary work," said Keith Schuette, head of the National Republican Institute for International Affairs, which conveys some of the money to foreign political parties that share the Republicans' views. "We've seen what the Socialists do for each other. We've seen what the Communists do for each other. And now we've come along, and we have a broadly democratic movement, a force for democracy."

In some respects, the program resembles the aid given by the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1950's, 60's and 70's to bolster pro-American political groups. But that aid was clandestine and, subsequent Congressional investigations found, often used planted newspaper articles and other forms of intentionally misleading information.

The current financing is largely public — despite some recipients' wish to keep some activities secret — and appears to be given with the objective of shoring up political pluralism, broader than the C.I.A.'s goals of fostering pro-Americanism. Although some grants go to unions and parties that are close to the Administration's policy line, others support groups that disagree with Washington on the danger of the Soviet threat, for instance, or on aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

## Concept Collects Praise and Criticism

The concept of a private group as a conduit for Government funds for such a program has drawn both praise and criticism from liberals and conservatives alike.

Supporters praise it for lending a novel flexibility to Government-aided efforts abroad, for doing what official agencies have never been comfortable doing in public.

Opponents in Congress have branded it as more anti-Communist than pro-democratic and have faulted it for meddling in other countries' internal affairs.

The National Endowment was created in 1983 as an amalgam of various sectors of American society, including business, labor, academic institutions and the two major political parties.

Its board of directors reflects that diversity, including such prominent figures as former Vice President Mondale; former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; Lane Kirkland, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.; Representative Dante B. Fascell, the Florida Democrat who heads the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Olin C. Robison, president of Middlebury College; Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr., chairman of the Republican National Committee, and Charles T. Manatt, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

The endowment's chairman is John Richardson, who was president in the 1960's of Radio Free Europe, which was funded by the C.I.A.. He was Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs in the 1970's, and has worked with nonprofit agencies such as Freedom House and the International Rescue Committee.

The money, disbursed to the National Endowment by the United States Information Agency, then flows through complex channels. Some is given directly by the group to those who use it. But most of it goes from the endowment to four "core grantees." They are the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s Free Trade Union Institute; the Center for International Private Enterprise of the Chamber of Commerce, and the National Republican and National Democratic Institutes for International Affairs, which are affiliated with the Republican and Democratic national committees. These either run programs themselves or pass the money on to others.

The concept of the endowment took shape as the country moved from the dark self-doubts after the Vietnam War into a new era of confidence in its own virtues and a conviction that democracy should be supported publicly and proudly, without the secrecy that tainted the C.I.A.'s activities.

"We should not have to do this kind of work covertly," said Carl Gershman, president of the endowment and an aide to Jeane J. Kirkpatrick when she was the chief United States delegate to the United Nations. "It would be terrible for democratic groups around the world to be seen as subsidized by the C.I.A. We saw that in the 60's, and that's why it has been discontinued. We have not had the capability of doing this, and that's why the endowment was created."

Mr. Gershman insists that there is no contact between the C.I.A. and the endowment and that before grants are made, a list of the potential recipients is sent by the endowment through the State Department to the C.I.A. to be sure none is receiving covert funds. No such case has been reported, Mr. Gershman said.

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J. Brian Atwood, president of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, which receives some of the money, denies that the endowment's work bears any resemblance at all to earlier C.I.A. activities, which he said "did terrible damage to our own values" and "reflected a misunderstanding of what our values as a democratic society were all about."

He said that "many institutions didn't know they were receiving C.I.A. money," and that those who get money from the endowment are supposed to know where the money comes from

and must agree to have the fact publicized.

Some grants seem at least superficially similar, however. La Prensa, the opposition paper in Nicaragua, is receiving \$100,000 worth of newsprint, ink and other supplies this year to help it survive. In the early 1970's, the C.I.A. gave at least \$1.6 million to El Mercurio, the major Santiago daily, which also faced economic pressure, from the Government of President Salvador Allende Gossens. Books and magazines were published with C.I.A. money, and campaigns to get out the vote were conducted, as they are now with endowment money.

The prospect of publicity causes discomfort to some who receive money. Because Congress has made the endowment subject to the Freedom of Information Act, Eugenia Kemble, head of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s Free Trade Union Institute, has expressed uneasiness about providing the detailed financial statements that are being required by the General Accounting Office. In a draft report, the G.A.O. criticized the endowment for inadequate monitoring of expenditures and recommended tighter procedures. Miss Kemble complained that any report going to the endowment can become public.

Since the end of World War II, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. has funneled money from various Government agencies to build up non-Communist unions abroad. Despite its denials, the labor movement has been suspected of conveying C.I.A. money. Miss Kemble expressed worry that publicity could endanger individuals facing dictatorial governments and involved in "sensitive" work.

"There are some grantees we are phasing out because they cannot stand this," she said. "There's a failure to empathize with the people out there in terms of the political difficulties in which they have to operate."

For example, detailed expense reports, including names and specifics of the clandestine Solidarity printing operation inside Poland, would probably give the Polish police enough information to close down the operation. Miss Kemble said one European organization had infiltrators in communist unions to report on their plans and activities; making details public would damage the effort, she said.

But Mr. Schuette, of the Republican Institute, has a different view. "We cannot be secret," he said. "There is nothing secret. Our rule is, it's going to be public. Therefore, I'm not going to do anything that is going to damage people if it becomes public."

## Congressional Criticism Is Not Uncommon

Although \$53.7 million seems a small amount when compared with the \$38.3 billion allocated in foreign aid over the last three years, some members of Congress object to the grants in view of cutbacks in domestic programs. At a recent Congressional hearing, Representative Barney Frank, Democrat of Massachusetts, said, "To say that we're not going to fund public transportation or research on cancer because we've got to give money to a French union for political purposes just doesn't seem reasonable."

Representative Hank Brown, Republican of Colorado, raised questions about possible conflict of interest, noting

that the endowment's board includes current or former officers of some of the major grant recipients, including the A.F.L.-C.I.O., the Democratic and Republican institutes, and the Chamber of Commerce. Although they do not vote on their own programs, he said, "The board has seen its job as one of dividing the public money among their own organizations."

Mr. Gershman and others involved counter that the input of such experienced people is essential for a wise program.

But that wisdom has also been challenged. At a Congressional hearing recently, Representative Frank chided the Democratic Institute for supporting the Social Democratic and Labor Party of Northern Ireland, which grew out of the nonviolent Catholic civil rights movement. Mr. Atwood called it "the only major party that is seeking to work through the democratic process," and said it needed help in building a structure. A total of \$85,000 has been allocated for a training institute and a seminar on financing, communications and organization, Mr. Atwood said.

## Taxing Americans To Tell Irish of Politics

Representative Frank raised an eyebrow. "Maybe I've been in Massachusetts too long," he said, "but the notion that we have to tax the Americans to teach the Irish about politics seems to me a very strange one. If people want to help one party or another in Northern Ireland, that's fine. But I don't think the American taxpayers ought to be taxed to do that."

That is precisely what is happening, however, not only in Northern Ireland, but also in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere. Those involved argue that democracy cannot be bolstered without strengthening democratic institutions.

The Republicans and Democrats approach the task in different ways. The Democrats usually hold conferences and seminars for a variety of parties in a given country or region, while the Republicans choose a particular party that seems to share conservative American positions on foreign policy and economic issues. The two institutes worked together to monitor the recent elections in the Philippines, documenting fraud and intimidation.

The effort thus provides common ground for diverse American viewpoints. "A conservative may see it as a better way to compete with the Communists," Mr. Atwood said. "I see it as a better way to bring about human rights in the world and a better way to bring about change and development in the world."

This sometimes puts the program at odds with the Administration's policies and preferences. The Social Democratic and Labor Party of Northern Ireland, for example, is a member of the Socialist International and a supporter of the Sandinista Government of Nicaragua, which the Reagan Administration would like to see overthrown.

## State Department Opposed Seoul Program

Similarly, when the Democrats proposed a conference in Washington of the South Korean opposition, the State Department worried about adverse reaction from the Seoul Government.

The endowment gave the grant anyway, the conference was held and the State Department ultimately revised its assessment.

On May 9-11, the Democrats used their money to sponsor a conference in Caracas of democratic parties from Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Spain "to share ideas and experiences of party leaders who have been through the same problem — military dictatorship," Mr. Atwood said.

This kind of activity has two long-term benefits, he says: First, to build a sense of international solidarity among those who believe in democracy, and second, to reduce the fear of some leaders in Washington that friendly military dictatorships may give way to democratically elected governments prone to Communist influence.

In Mr. Atwood's view, this can reassure "the people who are status quo-oriented, who say that we can't get on the side of change because we don't know what will happen."

"The fear of the unknown factor is less if you know the people who are pushing for change," he said.

The Republican Institute focuses more narrowly on moderate and conservative parties. "We wouldn't get involved with a Socialist Party," Mr. Schuette said. Those the Republicans have helped have often lost elections — in Portugal, Costa Rica and Bolivia, and most recently in Colombia, where the Conservative Party's Presidential candidate, Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, lost in a landslide May 26 to Virgilio Barco Vargas of the Liberal Party. The grant was intended to increase the participation of disaffected voters and party members.

"We do not fund political candidates in campaigns overseas," Mr. Schuette said. "Our programs are not designed or intended to have any effect on elections."

This was seconded by Mr. Fahrenkopf, the Republican national chairman and vice chairman of the endowment. "We feel we are accomplishing our purpose if in a country there are free elections," he declared. "It's really superfluous whether the particular parties we're helping are victorious or not."

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The lines between promoting democracy and promoting a particular party's chances in an election are hard to draw, however. The A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s Free Trade Union Institute has channeled money to unions and other organizations associated with particular parties in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Western Europe.

## Furor Over Aid To French Rightists

In an unpublicized move that was disclosed late last year, a \$575,000, two-year grant was authorized to an extreme right-wing French group, the National Inter-University Union, known as U.N.I., its acronym in French. In 1982, a parliamentary inquiry found that U.N.I. had been created largely by a paramilitary, extremist nationalist organization called Service d'Action Civique, or S.A.C., which was founded in 1947 to provide order at meetings and protection for Gen. Charles DeGaulle.

S.A.C. was infiltrated by criminal elements in the 1960's and 70's, the inquiry found, and was declared an illegal organization after a political scandal arose around the killing of six people in the southern French town of Aurioi in 1981. "U.N.I. was, at its beginnings, a satellite movement of S.A.C.," the inquiry concluded, "and it is today closely associated with it."

U.N.I. opposed the governing Socialists before and during the last election campaign, pasting posters over subway maps declaring, "Socialism is a lie and a fraud." It has distributed pamphlets accusing a Catholic aid agency of being a Marxist-Leninist front, and has campaigned against what it sees as Marxist influence in universities.

Last November, after French journalists reported the American funding of U.N.I., the endowment suspended its grant, Mr. Gershman said, leaving \$73,000 of the \$575,000 undelivered. The board is to decide next week whether to resume payments on the current grant, but Mr. Gershman said that no further grant would be made.

It is a new process, Mr. Fahrenkopf observed, one that is bound to run into trouble in the beginning, if it is as bold as it should be. "We're going to make mistakes," he said. "If we don't make mistakes, we shouldn't exist."