STAT
Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/01/11 : CIA-RDP90-00965R000504120001-2

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 2-E

WASHINGTON TIMES
10 March 1986

The Reagan Doctrine

Policy shift produces gains for democracy

By Don Mcleod
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The month of February, in the year 1986, was a rare time in the history of U.S. involvement in the affairs of the world. In a span of scarcely more than two weeks, two dictators fell from power, departures that were promoted and partly provoked by the U.S. government. This may be the most dramatic revision of U.S. policy since the early days of the Cold War.

For a full generation, the United States had seen one friendly government after another fall under the spell of forces hostile to democracy and to itself: From Eastern Europe to China, from Cuba to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, from Nicaragua to Iran, one faulty régime was often replaced by one even worse.

But since the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua in 1979, no other avowedly Marxist-Leninist government has taken control in a previously non-communist country. And though diplomatically friendly but despotic governments have fallen in Haiti and the Philippines, prospects for democracy and continuing U.S. friendship have survived.

Between the U.S.-engineered ouster of Life President of the Republic Jean-Claude Duvalier from Haiti and the U.S.-promoted ouster of Ferdinand Marcos from the Philippines, Ronald Reagan paid a commemorative visit to the Caribbean island nation of Grenada, where U.S. troops, two years earlier, had driven out a communist government and its Cuban support.

Old-style protests against "gunboat diplomacy" were remarkably absent; the U.S. president was welcomed as a savior of the island and its people. Prime Minister Herbert Blaize called Mr. Reagan "our national hero, our own rescuer, after God."

After 39 years of Cold War policy, has the United States finally found the secret of success? Future historians must answer that question, but for now, at least, what appears is a Reagan Doctrine brought to fruition.

The Reagan Doctrine has been largely inchoate until now. Syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer coined the term in an April 1985 essay for Time magazine. Still, the president had been developing it since his June 1982 speech before the British Parliament declaring "abhorrence of dictatorship in all its forms." He said "any system is inherently unstable that has no peaceful means to legitimize its leaders. In such cases, the very repressiveness of the state ultimately drives people to resist it, if necessary, by force. While we must be cautious about forcing the pace of change, we must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take actions to move toward them."

The basic tenets of his doctrine: "to foster the infrastructure of democracy — the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities — which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means."

Until recently, the Reagan Doctrine had been thought of primarily in terms of anti-communist insurgency. Faced with Soviet-and-Cuban-backed governments and their assaults on pro-Western governments around the globe, Mr. Reagan threw down the gauntlet in his 1985 State of the Union speech. He declared that the United States, recovered from the season of self-doubt brought on by the Vietnam War, had "resumed our historic role as a leader of the Free World. ... We must stand by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives — on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua — to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth."

The president asked Congress for money to send aid, including arms, to insurgents trying to overthrow Marxist regimes or Soviet occupation. He lost the vote for military aid to the rebel forces in Nicaragua, but he did get money for "humanitarian" assistance.

Congress also approved some $250 million a year in "covert" aid for the resistance to the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan and repealed the Clark Amendment, which had for a decade banned American aid to Jonas Savimbi's Angolan rebels.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz sharpened the picture when he said: "The new phenomenon that we are witnessing around the world — popular insurgencies against communist domination — is not an American creation. In every region, the people have made their own decision to stand and fight rather than see their cultures and freedoms quietly erased. They have made clear their readiness to fight with or without support, using every available means and enduring severe hardships, alone if need be. But America also has a moral responsibility. The lesson of the postwar era is that America must be the leader of the Free World."

The other side of the Reagan Doctrine — defense of democratic principle even under harsh but pro-Western governments — has a much longer pedigree and was the centerpiece of President Jimmy Carter's administration's human rights initiatives. The actions taken by the Reagan administration are "different from previous interventions, not so much as a matter of theory or principle but in the skill with which these have been carried out," says Donald Kagan, a Yale University historian.

"The Reagan Doctrine breaks American foreign policy out of a status quo, hold-the-line view of the world and for the first time has the potential to put America on the offensive as a revolutionary power, which is what American foreign policy should be," says a congressional source who has been active in creating a Republican Party consensus behind the doctrine.

Rep. James A. Courter, a New Jersey Republican and a congressional champion of the Reagan policy, says giving it full credit for the recent successes may be "giving Reagan too much credit. It might have been that events just took over." Another Republican congressional source says, "The policy has come about almost by necessity."

But Carl Gershman, president of the Reagan-initiated National Endowment for Democracy, says it may mean that "the United States understands the need to get ahead of the curve and to support democratic forces as a way of pre-empting the Soviet effort to take over countries.

Mr. Gershman says the U.S. tactic in the Philippines and Haiti prevented leftists from uniting with democratic forces in opposition to unpopular regimes and then pre-empting the ensuing government leadership. "What's happened in both cases," he says, "is that the Marxist left has been outflanked."

Scholars and statesmen are quick to point out the fact that Reagan did not invent the idea of promoting democracy, not only ideologically but for the sake of the national interest. It was, for example, the foundation for President Harry S. Truman's postwar doctrine. In the late 1940s, Mr. Truman simultaneously promised military protection for vulnerable friends of the United States and launched an enormous program of financial assistance. He said economic recovery was the best antidote to communism, once the military threat was blunted.

Mr. Truman said it would be U.S. policy "to help free peoples to maintain... their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes." But he also argued that the aid would "permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist."

Continued

Coping with evidence of fraud in the Philippine election of 1953, says Robert Osgood of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, President Dwight D. Eisenhower "went on the air and said we were impartial supporters of the electoral process and the constitutional system, and he warned against corruption. I think he would have played it about the same" as Mr. Reagan did the Philippine election of 1986. Mr. Eisenhower's realpolitik ideas led him to approve covert operations that overthrew Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala and Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran; both were playing off the nascent anti-Americanism in the Third World, and Mr. Eisenhower saw them as not only an annoyance but a threat to the West. (Indeed, one Cuban defector has testified that Mr. Arbenz was under KGB control.)

The anti-communist rhetoric of the Kennedy administration was more impassioned: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden . . . to assure the survival and success of liberty," Mr. Kennedy said in his oft-quoted inaugural address. Mr. Kennedy talked big, but carried a smaller stick; four months after intoning those words, he sponsored the invasion of the Bay of Pigs by exiled Cubans but failed to provide promised air cover. Historians such as the Hoover Institution's David Gress believe that Western Europe's decision to take a more conciliatory attitude toward the Soviet Union was born of Mr. Kennedy's refusal to tear down the Berlin Wall in 1961.

More important, in 1963 Mr. Kennedy moved against Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader of Vietnam — an ally who was not liberalizing his regime quickly enough. This destabilization of a friendly despot would seem to parallel Mr. Reagan's moves against Mr. Duvalier and Mr. Marcos, with two exceptions. First, Diem was assassinated. Second, his eventual successor, Nguyen Van Thieu, was not a democrat; he was, in a phrase popular at the time, "our bastard."

The dry run for the Haiti move came in 1965, when President Lyndon B. Johnson sent U.S. troops into the Dominican Republic to impose a truce in a civil war and allow the reformist military junta to estab-lish a provisional government and sponsor democratic elections.

But such ideological motivations gave way to the Nixon administration's — especially then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's — realpolitik arguments and actions.

The Nixon Doctrine promised material support, though not necessarily U.S. troops, for governments trying to resist foreign or domestic communist aggression. But the Nixon Doctrine was quickly associated with support for authoritarian, albeit anti-communist, rulers such as the shah of Iran.

Jimmy Carter, who spoke of the need to overcome "our inordinate fear of communism," directed his foreign policy efforts at putting substantial public pressure on friendly regimes while pursuing aggressive detente with the Soviet Union.

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick provided the transition from the Carter Doctrine to the Reagan Doctrine when she revitalized political philosopher Hannah Arendt's distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Mrs. Kirkpatrick combined realpolitik — the need to accept alliances with authoritarians whose actions we may detest — with ideology — the necessity of combating totalitarianism because of its uniquely barbarous character.

Writing in late 1979, Mrs. Kirkpatrick was thinking particularly of Argentina and revolutionary Nicaragua — the former an authoritarian regime that she predicted could move toward democracy, the latter an emerging totalitarian state. The germ of the Reagan Doctrine process is encouraging democratic institutions, practices and habits so that a viable democratic alternative is available. This is where Jimmy Carter failed, when dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle was toppling in Nicaragua.

Says Mr. Courter: "We proclaimed it to be a legitimate revolution, a legitimate effort by a coalition of groups in Nicaragua to rid themselves of Somoza, to rid themselves of an illegitimate dictator.

Says Michael Ledeen of Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies: "Carter found himself trapped in a continuum of his own device: He simultaneously refused to support a friendly dictator and refused to fight for the forces that we wanted to prevail."

Active sponsorship of democratic government within a friendly nation began under Mr. Reagan with U.S. pressures on President Jose Napoleon Duarte to liberalize his rule in El Salvador. In 1982, Salvadorans elected a constituent assembly in the first free elections in that country in 50 years.

And the democratic tide has continued apace. Mr. Ledeen says, "If you look at Latin America alone, over the last five to 10 years it's a fantastic transformation — almost every country you can think of" has become significantly more democratic.

The broader view of the Reagan Doctrine encompasses measures to encourage the trend throughout the world, by creating, even behind the Iron Curtain, the fertile soil for democracy that Mr. Truman sought. Part of this effort is carried on through Mr. Gershman's National Endowment for Democracy. Although operating on a modest budget — currently $18 million a year — it has cooperated with private organizations at home and abroad in efforts that have built its resources and programs.

The program is not without its critics. Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, South Carolina Democrat, calls it a "pork barrel," while Howard Phillips, chairman of the 800,000-member Conservative Caucus, says these efforts "seem to favor democratic socialist governments," which he opposes.

Conservatives also express the fear that the U.S.-nudged ouster of non-communist dictators in Haiti and the Philippines, while Marxist regimes elsewhere remain largely unmolested, could be the beginning of a dangerous trend.

At the same time conservatives and moderates alike argue that if the United States can intervene for the sake of democracy in the internal affairs of nations friendly to this country, it is difficult to justify a reluctance to aid anti-communist forces in such places as Nicaragua and Angola. Mr. Phillips thinks even the Reagan administration is softening its opposition to the Marxist dictatorships, despite the raised rhetoric.

Mr. Courter, on the other hand, leads the defense of the Reagan policy on two grounds. "A lot of people say it's important just for the United States to help true democratic resistance organizations and efforts in different parts of the world because we have to make sure that the Soviet Union knows that their adventurism has a price," he says. "That's a reason, but it's not the most important one. The most important reason is because it's right and just to be consistent with our own Declaration of Independence."

Consistency is increasingly persuasive to congressmen. Democrats, such as Rep. Dante B. Fascell of Florida, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, supported both the pressures that persuaded Mr. Marcos to step down, and aid for the Nicaraguan rebels. Others still make distinctions. Rep. Lee Hamilton of Indiana, second-ranking Democrat on the committee, applauds the success in the Philippines and Haiti but ques-

Continued

tions aid to the Nicaraguan resistance (often called Contras).

From both sides of the congressional aisle, however, there is general agreement that the day of propping up friendly dictators may be gone. Mr. Courter says he's "in favor of putting our actions where our mouth is in order to be consistent with our principles."

"We've had so much trouble over the years," a congressional staff expert says, "because we try different things: We try containment, we try supporting right-wing or military-oriented dictators, we try detente — and all these are holding patterns that are very difficult to build domestic support for. Now, for the first time, under Reagan we have a policy that practices what we preach."

The bottom line in the debate over the Reagan Doctrine may be the question of principle, the principle of democracy across the board, even if there is not total agreement. There may never be. And the application of principle to policy is not a new idea.

After all, it was Woodrow Wilson who said of a neighboring dictator: "I will not recognize a government of butchers."

What may be new is a systematic application of the principle to policy over an extended period of time. Says Mr. Kagan: "We've had 30 years of experience since Eisenhower, and that's why we're getting better."