

**United States Foreign Policy:
Sterile Anti-Communism?**

By

George Lister

Why is the United States so obsessed with anti-Communism that it fears and opposes all political, economic and social change in the Free World? Why does the United States support right wing dictatorships?

These are questions which are frequently asked by critics of United States foreign policy. The fact that they are asked even by some sincere and friendly critics reflects the extent of the confusion and misunderstanding which still prevails regarding our objectives and tactics. Some direct answers are set forth below. They are not intended as a profound and thorough analysis of all facets of the subjects discussed. That would require many pages, even volumes. Rather, the following paragraphs try to provide a few relevant answers as briefly and as clearly as possible, even at the cost of much oversimplification, and leaving many important things unsaid and many pertinent questions unanswered. Numerous speeches and statements by United States officials, along with a multitude of published Government documents, are available for those who desire a more detailed explanation of our policies.

First of all, the questions asked in the opening sentences cannot be answered without reference to the two

principal foreign

principal foreign policy objectives of the United States today.

Our primary objective is quite simple--survival as an independent nation. Unfortunately this very imperfect world of ours still abounds with hatred, ignorance, injustice, violence and danger, and survival is not always easy, either for an individual or for a country. Thus, the first objective of the United States is, simply, survival. The second basic objective of our foreign policy today is the extension and strengthening of democracy, abroad as in our own country. There are two compelling motives for this democratic objective. First, it has become quite apparent that a democratic world is a safer world for the United States. We have irritating disputes with other democratic countries, but the really dangerous, critical problems arise with the dictatorships, particularly with the totalitarian dictatorships of Communism and Fascism. Surely the history of the past three decades provides ample evidence of the accuracy of this statement. Therefore, for entirely pragmatic reasons of self-interest it is advisable for the United States to seek the development of a more democratic world. The second reason for our
democratic objective

democratic objectives is that we believe that a democratic world is not only a safer world, but a better world. In other words, the United States Government is motivated by a clear and positive democratic ideology.

At this point it should be emphasized that the use of the word "democracy" here is not restricted to a narrow formal political definition. Democracy involves much more than just occasional political elections, and the value of such elections, even when they are honest, can be very limited if the great mass of the people are poor, exploited and ignorant, and without adequate opportunity to improve their lot. True democracy means economic and social democracy as well as political democracy. It should also be stressed that "democracy" is not being used here as synonymous with the American way of life, or with capitalism. We are not trying to rule or control the world. Nor do we accept the old, discredited Marxist-Leninist cliches which still interpret the basic world struggle today as one of capitalism vs socialism. The United States is not trying to impose a way of life, a political dictatorship, or an economic blueprint on

blueprint on other countries. That is the avowed historic role of the Communists and Fascists. From the viewpoint of the United States, it is infinitely preferable for every country and every people to have an opportunity to develop its own way of life, and the economic and social system of its own choosing, within the framework of political democracy. This is democratic self-determination in its fullest sense.

Now for a few comments on our actual efforts to achieve these policy goals, survival and democracy, in this very imperfect and dangerous world.

A quarter of a century ago the greatest and most urgent threat to United States survival and to world democracy was the Nazi-Fascist Axis. As a result, we gave immense assistance to one of the most appalling dictatorships that has ever existed in the history of the human race, the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. And, with our help, the Stalinist dictatorship succeeded in defeating the Nazi invasion. Today Communist dictatorship is unquestionably the greatest danger to United States survival and to world democracy. As we helped in preventing Nazi-Fascist domination of the world 25 years ago, today we are trying to help prevent
the expansion

the expansion of Communist dictatorship. This includes helping to prevent the grave ills which still afflict many areas of the world (political oppression, economic exploitation, race prejudice, etc.) from being exploited by the Communists in such a way as to justify and achieve the establishment of new Communist dictatorships. This, then, is the negative, preventive aspect of our day-to-day policy. But those who claim United States policy is limited to sterile anti-Communism are wrong.

The positive aspect of the United States Government's policy consists of our efforts to help the development of democracy, both at home and abroad. These efforts make the United States Government an active opponent of the status quo. This statement is not mere theory, or beautiful words, divorced from reality and actual practice. It is relevant to point out that a profound social revolution is being conducted throughout the United States today in the field of race relations, a revolution which our Government is helping to carry out successfully, democratically and with relatively little violence.

Of course

Of course the development of democracy inside the United States, very imperfect as it still is, has not been an easy task. And the United States Government faces much greater difficulties in its efforts to help in the development of democracy and democratic self-determination outside our country. Many of these difficulties are underestimated or overlooked, and it is just at this point that much of the misunderstanding arises regarding United States objectives and tactics. Therefore, it is useful to spell out a few of these difficulties.

For one thing, it is naive to assume that there is always a popular and effective democratic alternative to an undemocratic or unpopular government. Recent history shows all too clearly that often there is no democratic alternative (from the democratic left, right or center) ready and able to rule effectively. And when undemocratic or unpopular governments fall, or are voted out of power, they are frequently followed, sooner or later, by governments which are equally unpopular or undemocratic.

Secondly, in

Secondly, in a country where the foundations for democracy are extremely weak, it is also naive to assume that they can be built quickly. Democracy is a far more civilized and sophisticated form of society than is dictatorship, and it is much simpler and easier to establish a dictatorship than it is to build a democracy. Indeed, this is one of the great tactical advantages which the Communists and Fascists have always enjoyed over their democratic opponents. It is absurd to expect that a country with a long history of political oppression and economic exploitation, where the great majority of people are extremely poor and cannot even read or write, will be able to produce a stable democracy over night. The odds are all against this happening. Even when such a country succeeds in holding an honest and peaceful election, it is only taking the first painful steps along the long, hard, dangerous road leading to real democracy. This is not to say that democracy is not the most desirable objective. We are convinced that it is. But this does mean that it requires much more than just the assumption of office by well intentioned people, democratic speeches and the

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passage of a few wise laws, essential as all of these things are. In the type of country described above, the creation of a stable democracy requires, for example, that the level of education be raised much higher, that the national economy be modernized, that national wealth and production not only be used and distributed more justly but increased significantly, and that laws not only be passed but enforced. An intelligent political policy demands realism as well as idealism, and it is unrealistic to believe that there is a quick and easy path to democracy.

Another difficulty is that whereas dictatorship can be imposed on a nation from the outside, by the unilateral action of a foreign power, democracy by its very nature must depend largely upon the abilities and efforts of the nation itself. The capacity for democracy must be developed inside a country, among its own citizens.

Now there are various ways in which the United States can and does help to increase the opportunity for the development of democracy in other countries. As a matter of fact, a great deal of time and planning and effort and money is devoted to such endeavors, which are sometimes successful
and sometimes

and sometimes not. For example, on occasion the United States can exert the kind of influence and persuasion which will stimulate and encourage another country to implement more democratic policies and to pursue more democratic objectives. Often the United States can help in the establishment and expansion of the kind of educational system which will promote the growth of democracy. Sometimes we can bring foreigners to our own country for training which we hope will increase their contribution to democracy when they return home, at the same time that they help us to understand better the life of their people. And very often we supply other countries with large amounts of economic aid. In this connection, however, one point should be emphasized. The mere fact that the United States Government extends economic assistance to a country does not necessarily mean that we endorse all the policies and measures of the government of that country, or even that we necessarily believe that it is a democratic government. It might be pointed out that the United States has provided considerable economic assistance to some Communist controlled countries. We do not intend economic help as an endorsement of the status quo or of dictatorship. Rather, we hope our aid will

contribute directly

contribute directly or indirectly to the democratic development as well as the economic progress of the recipient country. If the United States extended economic aid only to those areas of the world in which democracy is well established and flourishing, we would be helping precisely those areas which need our assistance least.

It goes without saying that these are extremely complicated matters. Foreign policy decisions require not only consideration of prevailing conditions but also of trends and intentions. One country which has never enjoyed democratic government may be starting to achieve encouraging progress in that direction, considering the level of its economic and educational development. Another country, far more advanced on the democratic path, may be entering a phase of political deterioration. It is because these problems are so complex that we are convinced that there is no convenient formula for us to follow, and that our tactics at any given time or place must depend upon our judgment and analysis of all factors involved at that moment. Thus, our tactics vary according to circumstances. But our overall long range objective remains constant--democracy.

Before concluding,

Before concluding, it is probably well to emphasize that none of the foregoing is meant to imply that the United States possesses a monopoly of wisdom. It is quite apparent that we have not even solved all of our own problems, much less found the answers to all the problems of the rest of the world. Nor do we always make the most effective use of our opportunities to achieve our objectives.

Like all governments, the United States Government is composed of human beings. Sometimes we act on inadequate information. And sometimes our judgment is poor. On the other hand, we often act on the basis of good judgment and information, and achieve very beneficial results. It should also be noted that both because the United States itself has become a more democratic country and because its problems and responsibilities as a world power have grown, our foreign policy has become more democratic and our activity on behalf of world democracy has increased.

Of course there is criticism, both in this country and abroad, of our policies and tactics. Such criticism is part of the democratic process, and when this criticism is informed, objective, and constructive, it can be very helpful. Not

all criticism

all criticism of the United States is of this kind. Some is malicious, and based largely on misinformation and prejudice. But regardless of whether it is well-intentioned or otherwise, criticism of our tactics is not particularly disturbing. What does give cause for serious concern is misunderstanding and suspicion of our basic motives and objectives. I have encountered such misunderstanding over the past two years during my numerous lengthy political-ideological discussions in Washington with visiting foreign groups, and much of it has arisen in connection with the very subjects mentioned above.

It is hoped that these few pages will help to remove some of this misunderstanding. Obviously, many many other things remain to be said. But if the reader finds it difficult to accept some or most of the statements and reasoning set forth above, let him ask himself the following questions. Is it not clear that a world filled with prosperous, well-educated democracies would be a safer world for the United States Government? Is it not clear that the major trouble spots of the world today would be far less dangerous from

the viewpoint

the viewpoint of the United States if they had high living standards, modern economies, and long and firm democratic traditions? Is it not clear that the best allies of the Communists and Fascists are injustice, poverty and racial prejudice? And is it not natural that Americans who have worked and struggled so hard to develop democracy in their own country feel solidarity with the cause of democracy throughout the world?