



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

NOMINATION FOR THE WARREN M. CHRISTOPHER AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS

GEORGE LISTER

This memorandum nominates George Lister, DRL Senior Policy Advisor, for the Warren M. Christopher Award for sustained outstanding achievement in global affairs, specifically democracy and human rights.

Mr. Lister has dedicated most of his long career in the Foreign Service to the promotion of democracy and human rights. Since his retirement in 1981, he has worked every day in the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights as an unpaid volunteer. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. calls him "Mr. Human Rights." It is time that his lifelong achievements for human rights should be recognized by the Department of State.

George Lister's promotion of democracy among socialists, and his campaign to break the alliance of socialists with communists, is one of the great untold success stories of American diplomacy. Early in his career he served in the Soviet empire, in Warsaw and Moscow. He soon became convinced that we needed an activist pro-democracy approach, with more emphasis on promoting democracy, rather than merely defending the status quo against the communists. He also perceived that we were not adequately distinguishing between the democratic and anti-democratic Left.

Lister took that view to Italy, where he was assigned as First Secretary in 1957. After clearance with the Ambassador, he initiated and developed contact with the socialists, then allied with the communists. He encouraged them to distance themselves from the communists, because of the Stalinist opposition to democracy. His apartment became a gathering place for many Italian socialists, and his influence was a key factor in their final break with the communists.

Unfortunately, the DCM in Rome was rigidly opposed to any contact with the socialists, and became very irritated with Lister's efforts. The DCM favored driving the socialists back into the arms of the communists, since he considered all Leftists anathema. Despite the highest performance ratings from others, the DCM's rating of Lister led to a Foreign Service board recommendation of "selection out." Fortunately, Averell Harriman intervened, and Lister was able to continue.

When he moved to the ARA bureau, Lister brought along his integrity and his quiet determination to turn American policy toward supporting democracy rather than merely opposing communism. In 1966, he wrote a widely circulated U.S.I.A. pamphlet, "Una Politica Anticomunista Esteril," emphasizing the USG's active support for democracy.

When the U.S. intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1965, the Department sent Lister to gather evidence of the threat of a communist takeover. Lister reported that the communist threat was very real, but also concluded that the intervention could have been avoided if the U.S. had pushed the Dominican government earlier to hold fair elections.

George Lister's honesty and independence of mind have endeared him to many who love truth, but it has not helped his career. Though without honor in his own Department, some of the foreign leaders whose lives he has touched have honored him.

Lister began his work on Guatamala in 1968, when he called the Department's attention to the many serious human rights violations being committed under the military regime. Lister worked with Guatamalan democratic leaders, including Vinicio Cerezo of the Christian Democratic Party. When Guatamala finally held democratic elections in 1985, Cerezo was elected President. He invited Lister to his inauguration.

National elections were scheduled for the Dominican Republic in May, 1978. Pena Gomez, leader of the democratic opposition party (PRD), came to Washington to see Lister to warn that there might be an attempt to prevent an honest vote. During the election, when it became clear the PRD was winning, the armed forces interrupted the vote count. In the absence of USG action, Lister urged Congressman Fraser to call President Carter. The President called Dominican President Balaguer, the vote count was resumed, and the PRD peacefully came to power. Invited by Pena, Lister attended the inauguration.

In October, 1992, the new, democratic government of Chile invited George Lister to Santiago to present him with an award for his work for human rights in Chile. The story behind the award has never been told in the U.S., but is well known in Chile. Lister was a determined opponent of the Pinochet dictatorship. He also played a major role in persuading the Chilean Socialist Party to leave its alliance with the Communists. Lister's clear understanding of the difference between democratic socialism and Leninism influenced many, and helped turn Chile back from its deadly flirtations with Marxism and right-wing dictatorship.

Perhaps George Lister's greatest lifetime achievement was his role in the creation of the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights. In 1973, Congressman Don Fraser (D.-Minn.) began pushing for a higher priority for human rights in U.S. foreign policy. Lister worked closely with Fraser and his staff. Fraser held hearings, drafted the legislation requiring annual Human Rights Reports by the State Department, and called for designation of human rights officers in each regional bureau. George Lister became the first Human Rights Officer for the ARA (Latin American) bureau. His 1979 memorandum on improving the preparation of human rights reports resulted in numerous reforms, including the creation of Country Reports Teams.

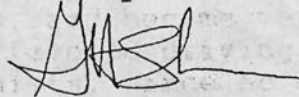
Mr. Lister's injection of human rights into our South Korea policy greatly improved U.S. relations with Korea's democratic opposition, and distanced us from our intimate relations with the South Korean military dictatorship. Kim Dae Jung presented Lister with a scroll of appreciation in 1984 for his work for Korean human rights, and he was presented an award in 1994 by the Kim Dae Jung Peace Foundation.

George Lister's friendship with both Democrats and Republicans resulted in his continuing influence during the Reagan and Bush administrations. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights from 1981 to 1985 wrote, "George Lister's contacts in the human rights community are just plain amazing, and not only here at home; abroad as well, he seems to know everyone in the human rights community -- from Poles to Guatamalans, from South Africans to South Koreans. He has been in this business longer than anyone else at State, and has been through battles and dangerous moments with many human rights leaders overseas, so they talk to George as to an intimate colleague. His network of contacts, the information at his disposal, his friendships are all an irreplaceable and unique asset for the Department."

Bill Richardson, now our Ambassador to the U.N., wrote in 1993, "For over twenty years, George has been pushing steadily for precisely what the Clinton Administration is now advocating -- democracy and human rights. I know of no one in our government who has worked longer and more successfully for those objectives."

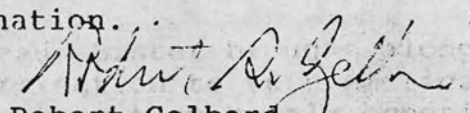
George Lister still comes in daily to work in the State Department. He is unpaid. But he is still working for human rights, the passion of his life. For those of us who work with him, he is a source of inspiration. He also has a marvelously irreverent sense of humor.

He has been honored for his work in Guatamala, Chile, and South Korea. There are many other countries where his work has helped strengthen human rights and democracy. He has never sought any awards, including this one. I nominate him for the first Christopher Award because such a prophet should also be honored in his own country.



Gregory H. Stanton
Foreign Service Officer
Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

I heartily endorse this nomination.



Robert Gelbard
Assistant Secretary
International Narcotics and
Law Enforcement Affairs