

To The Guillotine

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

Two days after he was elected President of a nation usually described as a democracy and, by constitution, guaranteeing basic civil rights to all its citizens, Ronald Reagan tossed a political ball out on the court with an ominous bounce. He said: "I don't think that you can turn away from country because here and there they do not agree with our concept of human rights."

It didn't take Alexander Haig long to pick up the Reagan ball and run with it. He attacked yesterday's American human rights policy as one having "the practical consequence of driving authoritarian regimes, traditionally friendly to the West, into totalitarian models."

But that was just the beginning of the new Administration's devaluation of human rights as a cornerstone of our foreign policy. In a move compatible with placing in charge of our Department of Energy a man who aims to liquidate that department, the President has made Ernest Lefever Assistant Secretary of State For Human Rights. This new guardian of American treasure accuses the previous administration of trivializing the human rights concept. We have larger fish to fry. We must put the human rights file in the bottom drawer now and cuddle up to nations that offer us good trade opportunities. These are nations that are likely to aid their military strength to ours. They may loan a bit to the authoritarian side, but, by golly, they'll have no truck with Communism; and that's what counts most of all.

You can sell this concept to millions of Americans today but millions of others who take the trouble to analyze the Reagan - Haig - Lefever evaluation of the role of human rights in our relations with other nations are understandably dismayed. Early in January, when President - elect Reagan made a gift of a gun to President Jose Lopez Portillo of Mexico, he must have recognized a plea for Washington's continuing dedication to human rights in Portillo's advice. A friendly President of Mexico was urging a friendly president - elect of his nation's northern neighbor to be extremely cautious in approaches to El Salvador.

When you come bearing a gun, or an armory of guns today, you may bolster a paramilitary regime; but if, at the same time, you fail to recognize the Central American's hunger for freedom and for economic and social betterment, you may fall into the trap of inspiring in them sympathy for Marxist guerrillas.

Oh, nonsense, the new forces in Washington reply. Hasn't Human Rights Secretary Lefever reminded us that the greatest threats to human rights come from the messianic totalitarian regimes whose brutal grip books no opposition? And can't you get it through your heads that there is a vast difference between a totalitarian rule and an authoritarian government? Put your trust in the authoritarians like Cuba's Batista or Nicaragua's Somoza of yesterday or

today's Bolivia's Meza or Argentina's Videla's or Chile's Pinochet, and you'll be agreeably surprised to behold their eyes alight with promise of freedom, justice, mercy, and love for the common man.

After all, we don't have a totalitarian government in Iran; it's just an authoritarian one. Remove the mote from your eyes and behold how handsomely the Ayatolla Khomeini has bestowed the blessings of human rights on his people!

Friendly tyrants, bless their souls. Soon they'll blossom into red-white-and-blue champions of liberty.

So the previous administration was guilty of "trivializing" human rights, as Ernest Lefever has told us. Take notice now that if Jimmy Carter had not worked so hard to uphold our legal commitment to human rights, he would have found the USSR behaving honorably at Helsinki.

Now we have Mr. Lefever carrying our human rights flag. If he obeys that impulse and dips that flag toward the ground, he may convince Moscow this is a good year to torture more dissidents -- many of them Jews. After all, we are now committed to a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations, are we not?

MIDDLE EAST WILL "EXPLODE"

NEW YORK (WNS) -- In a sharply worded speech at the Plaza Hotel, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia warned that unless the U.S. changes its Middle East policy and shifts away from its support of Israel, "things will get out of hand and the area will explode. American and Western interests will suffer untold losses as a result."

Yamani said, "To the Saudis, there are only two threats in this world -- international Communism and Israel. The first helps to reinforce our friendship with America while the second is a threat to that friendship. It is difficult to conceive of a compromise in a situation like this. The second threat is far more tangible and more evident than the first one and an actual danger is obviously worse than a potential danger."

Contending that the problem between a "perfect model" relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia is the Arab - Israeli obstacle, Yamani declared: "Israel is the opening through which the Russians slip into

the Arab world. That is the Communist entry visas to our countries. And the more support the U.S. gives to Israel, the better is the climate for the Russians in the region. This is fully borne out by the pattern of Arab - Russian relations during the past three decades." Claiming that Russia

is going to benefit from the present Israeli policies, he continued: "When the U.S., due to internal political pressure refrains from per-

forming its duty in bringing peace to the area, it thereby serves the Russian interests to the detriment of its own interests and perhaps those of Israel itself."

PRESS REPORTS ARE EXAGGERATED

JERUSALEM (WNS) A report published by the Military Governor of Hebron claims that recent press accounts of harassment of local Arabs by Jewish settlers was grossly exaggerated.

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