

legitimacy of governments mean that a regime's treatment of its population cannot become a genuine object of international concern. The intervention of one state in the affairs of another and subversion (even though both practices are, in fact, widespread) are still considered reprehensible. Despite the fact that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between domestic and foreign policy, countries continue to protect what they have defined as domestic politics from foreign diplomatic incursions.

Moreover, certain American priorities with respect to foreign policy, such as nuclear non-proliferation, the safeguarding of alliances and strategic-arms limitation, are difficult to reconcile with firm positions on human rights. Thus the withdrawal of credit from Argentina because of its poor record on human rights will not help curb the nuclear ambitions of that country. Other countries have agreed to a sort of trade-off with the United States; in exchange for American bases or for protection of strategic American interests, authoritarian regimes receive American support. And, no matter what is said, it is not easy to disassociate American positions on dissidents in the Soviet Union from negotiations over the SALT agreements.

Position still meaningful

Finally, America's desire to encourage governments to improve the lot of their populations may be totally counter-productive. A government under stress as a result of indictment as repressive withdraws into itself, protects itself and may become even more repressive. President Carter has been criticized for harming *détente* by his crusades for human rights, and thus contributing to strengthening the stranglehold of the Warsaw Pact, which will not promote the liberalization of policy in the East European countries. Some Soviet dissidents have even accused the President of harming their cause by provoking drastic reactions on the part of the Kremlin.

Should Washington, therefore, entirely abandon the idea of a human-rights policy? Despite all that has been said, the answer is still no. Given certain conditions, the first of which is more modest ambitions, an American position in favour of human rights may still be meaningful.

In order to avoid setting themselves up as the champions of human rights and inevitably appearing hypocritical, Americans might first agree to submit to the same criteria they seek to impose on others. In order to accomplish this, it would be highly preferable if they concentrated their efforts, as has already been suggested, within the framework of multilateral institutions such as the Helsinki agreements and the United Nations. At the very least, a human-rights policy would have much more chance of success if it were seen as a strategy of the Western countries in general.

Next, it follows that Washington should take immediate action with respect to regimes that are in power by virtue of American support. President Carter has already taken some hesitant steps in this direction in Latin America. But these were still very minor in comparison with everything that had been done in the past (and is probably still being done) to support authoritarian regimes. Would American policy not have more credibility if it were aimed at South Korea or the Philippines rather than at its longtime rival the Soviet Union?

A further condition is that the American Government, Congress and people would have to be courageous enough to admit that human rights can sometimes be better served by left-wing regimes than by pro-American ones. Objectively speaking, it is very difficult to believe that Batista had more respect for human rights than Castro or that Pinochet is a better protector of freedom than Allende was, regardless of the value judgments which may be made of the Cuban revolution or the Popular Unity Government of Chile.

As a result, the notion of rights must be expanded to include collective — economic and social — rights. Can we believe that Washington will ever progress to this position? Can we still believe that American officials will one day agree to open contemplation of a new world economic order? Answering these questions in the affirmative requires a great deal of optimism. Be that as it may, it does appear that this is the direction a genuine universal human-rights policy will have to take.

Meanwhile, all that can be expected is that the American Government will take action one step at a time, in a way that is not too contradictory — satisfying, one might hope, some of these conditions, achieving partial and, one might again hope, positive results. Mr Carter may look like the heir of Jefferson, but it cannot be denied that the spirit of Hamilton is alive around him and within himself. The odds are that the legacy of Hamilton will succeed in greatly reducing Carter's grand aspirations, if this has not already happened. The American contradiction is nowhere close to being resolved.

Note to subscribers:

Production delays have made it desirable to combine the May/June and July/August issues. Subscription expiry dates will be adjusted to provide subscribers with six separate issues.