

entirely.

Jimmy Carter seems to be sincere, as were those who spoke about the "New Frontier" and as were John Foster Dulles and Woodrow Wilson. When Americans talk about freedom, they believe in it; when they sing the praises of their moral character, they believe in that too, to the point where they can bring about the resignation of a President. But, at the same time, they believe in the virtues of unbridled accumulation of wealth in a world of rank inequalities.

This inveterate ambiguity permeates the entire history of the United States, for Americans have always preserved the legacies of both Hamilton and Jefferson. His respect for individuals and the will of the people made Thomas Jefferson, according to whom "every man is a potential ruler", the champion of democracy. As the author of the Declaration of Independence, he believed so strongly in this democratic virtue that, for a time, he was opposed to industrial growth. The Jeffersonian tradition is still an essential component of the American system. Both the great purge following Watergate and the generous intentions of Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young are living testimony to this fact.

On the other hand, Alexander Hamilton, architect of the federalist Constitution of 1787, was the defender of economic liberalism and law and order in the interests of capitalism. He felt that, if the economic interests of the landowners had to come into conflict with democracy, it was democracy that must be sacrificed, since America's importance and power depended, above all, on private property and the economic strength of large industry. Those who were later to maintain that "what is good for General Motors is good for America" were only restating the Hamiltonian argument.

The American miracle consists in the fact that these two traditions have been able to survive side by side without their inherent contra-

dictions resulting in total chaos. But there is some question whether this ambiguity is not basically detrimental to American foreign policy, or at least to those at whom it is directed.

The use of the term "freedom" is at the very heart of this ambiguity. Americans may call themselves defenders of freedom and at the same time support authoritarian regimes in many parts of the world. For, in American terms, freedom means essentially freedom of trade, the freedom to carry on business, as much as individual freedom. But the word is sometimes defined differently elsewhere. For many people, freedom can only be envisaged realistically and meaningfully in collective terms. From this point of view, "equality of opportunity" is much less important than equality of result. In this case, economic and social rights, rather than political and individual rights, have to be emphasized.

President Carter might well be sincere in stating, as he did in his inaugural address of January 1977: "Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere." But his words remain hollow to those who see the approaches of Hamilton and Jefferson as basically irreconcilable. For such people freedom for some means, essentially, less freedom for others. This attitude does not make it easy to develop a true international policy on human rights.

Responsibilities

Moreover, by defining freedom over the past 30 years as the opposite of Communism, American policy has produced catastrophic results (to use the expression of an American commentator) from the point of view of human rights. On more than one occasion, it has been responsible for perpetuating what it now seeks to prevent.

In the name of anti-Communism, Americans have often set up, or at least supported, regimes that violated human rights. In Latin America (consider Chile, where the

United States preferred Pinochet to Allende, who was democratically elected, or Brazil), in Asia (South Korea and the Philippines, to mention only two examples), and even in Europe (Greece under the colonels, Spain under Franco, Portugal under Salazar), in the name of containment or the *Pax Americana*, Washington had no compunction about aligning itself with those who maintained themselves in power from day to day by means that clearly flouted the most basic freedoms. Indeed, it seems that the defence of American freedom has often involved indirect support for the violation of freedom elsewhere. How can the United States criticize the Soviet Union for its treatment of dissidents when it is itself responsible for so many violations in other parts of the world?

Furthermore, thanks to an annual budget of approximately \$7 billion never yet subjected to real scrutiny by Congress (which nevertheless examines in microscopic detail much smaller sums of money allocated in aid to developing countries), the intelligence-gathering agencies of the United States carry out covert operations whose purpose, it has been learnt recently, is to destabilize popular governments, and even to assassinate foreign leaders, not to mention the many illegal activities they have carried out in the United States itself. It is enough to set Jefferson's statue aquiver in his memorial, which is still the pride of the American capital!

It is, to say the least, disturbing for the victims of these operations to hear the new moral message of American foreign policy!

Constraints

As if this were not enough to make Carter's human-rights policy appear meaningless, there are a number of factors that stand in the way of such a policy, arising from the very nature of the international system.

The rules that relate to the sovereignty of states and the notion that still prevails regarding the